REMOVING SYSTEMIC STRONGHOLDS IN SHIFTING CONGREGATIONAL PARADIGMS OF WORSHIP AND PRAXIS

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ABSTRACT

REMOVING SYSTEMIC STRONGHOLDS IN SHIFTING
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The problem at Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church (MCCBC), Columbus, Ohio, is ministry leaders and members resist acknowledging and following the Holy Spirit's charismatic lead in the church's operations and congregational worship. If the church's ministry leaders participate in focused educational workshops about the charismatic role the Spirit plays in the church, then they will be equipped to help the membership address its reluctance towards the Holy Spirit's charismatic movement within the ministries. The training symposium helped ministry leaders guide the congregation toward increased engagement and participation in its ecclesiastical authority, challenging its previous Baptist beliefs and traditions.

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I sincerely thank my supportive community for standing by me throughout my doctoral journey. First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my United Theological Seminary mentors, Dr. Jonathan McReynolds and Dr. Anita Coleman, for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and expertise. Their mentorship has been essential in shaping both my research and academic development. Additionally, they, along with the UTS faculty advisor, Dr. Reggie Abraham, shared that there would be moments during the process when we might feel unworthy of being in the program due to numerous challenges like writer's block, family concerns, pastoral and ministerial duties, emotional struggles, stress, and other issues. These circumstances can lead us to fall into a false reality called "impostor syndrome," which makes us feel like frauds even when we are successful. However, they offered valuable insights and pastoral care techniques each semester to help us overcome this and to "trust the process." They reminded us of when Jesus told His disciples to "get into the boat and go to the other side." In other words, if Jesus gets in our boat, He is faithful to bring us to the other side.

Special thanks to my Pastoral Care and Counseling cohorts, semester colleagues and friends, the Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church family, project participants, and the professional and contextual associates, whose camaraderie and support made this journey enjoyable and rewarding. I also appreciate the members of my dissertation committee for their insightful feedback and constructive criticism, which greatly

enhanced the quality of this work. Their willingness to pray with and for me during these challenging times has been a source of inspiration.

I thank the Friends of United for their financial and institutional support, especially through the John and Mary Bonebrake and Presidential Scholars scholarship programs. Their support has been essential to my pursuit of religious studies. With increased knowledge and skills, I am eager to address the changing needs of my local church and community.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who contributed to this achievement. I am especially grateful to my immediate family – Alison, Leon II, Alicia, and Jay – for their unwavering love, patience, and support. All of your prayers and faith in me have been my greatest and most valuable earthly sources of strength. Stay blessed and remain faithful, by the grace of God.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctoral thesis to my living mother, Mother Claudia Mae Miller Rodgers (Mammaw), the matriarch of our family, whose ninety-five years of wisdom, resilience, and unwavering love have been the foundation I stand on. Her enduring faith and gentle guidance have shaped my character and inspired my pursuit of knowledge. I also dedicate this thesis to the cherished memory of my late father, Deacon Bennie Rodgers, Sr., who became my spiritual advisor and whose legacy of integrity, devotion, and spiritual leadership continues to guide me. His counsel and prayers have been a source of strength throughout my journey.

Additionally, I want to honor the memories of my late father-in-law, Sherwood Pelham, and my late mother-in-law, Velta Smith Pelham (Grandma Vee). They warmly welcomed me into their family through my loving wife, Alison. Their kindness and acceptance have enriched my life and strengthened our family bonds.

To all these cherished individuals, I owe a debt of gratitude that words cannot fully express. Their involvement in my life is nothing short of divine providence. Their sacrifices, prayers, love, encouragement, and examples have made this achievement possible.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Anno Domini, in the year of the Lord (after the birth of Jesus Christ)
BCE	Before Common Era; also, Before Christian or Current Era
CA	Contextual Associate
CAs	Contextual Associates
COGIC	Church of God in Christ
COVID	Coronavirus or Wuhan pneumonia
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DtrH	Deuteronomistic History
FGBCFI	Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International or Fellowship
IRB-HSR	Institutional Review Board for Health Sciences Research
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and other sexual orientations and gender identities
MBA	Master of Business Administration
N^3	Now to the Next to the New (strategic plan)
OSU	The Ohio State University
PA	Professional Associate
PAs	Professional Associates
PPT	PowerPoint Presentation
Rh	Hemolytic Disease

RNB	Rodgers' Neighborhood Basketball
S.W.O.T.	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TCM	The Community Mission
TV	Television
UTS	United Theological Seminary
U.S.	United States

Indeed, we live as humans but do not wage war according to human standards, for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.

— (2 Cor. 10:3-6, NRSV)

INTRODUCTION

It is believed that the context, Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church (MCCBC) in Columbus, Ohio, has historically resisted acknowledging and following the Spirit's charismatic guidance in its operations and worship. Therefore, I believe that if ministry leaders participate in a focused educational symposium about *charismata* and the roles it plays in the local church, then they will be equipped to educate the congregation about the Holy Spirit's presence and involvement in ministry. Therefore, this doctoral project focused on implementing a training symposium on spiritual disciplines and influences for the congregation and leadership team. These sessions took place over seven weeks, including a revival-type worship service in Session Two that provided a "soft" introduction to a charismatic worship service designed not to overwhelm first-time worshippers with this type of experience.

Since 2002, I have served as the senior pastor of the church and have personally observed that the context tends to favor learned behaviors and thinking, rooted in traditional Baptist and other Christian doctrines and dogmas, rather than embracing a more charismatic approach to how the Holy Spirit operates in a spiritual setting. This problem I investigated required much prayer, reflection, and meditation because of the way I was raised in a more conservative belief that spiritual gifts are no longer available or necessary today, and that certain manifestations of the Spirit, such as speaking in a heavenly language, casting out demonic powers, and laying on of hands, have ceased.

Consequently, the Spirit guided me to the project theme: Removing Systemic Strongholds in Shifting Congregational Paradigms of Worship and Praxis.

Chapter One, Ministry Focus, provides an overview of the contextual analysis of MCCBC, my spiritual autobiography, ministerial journey, and how these elements converge to support the church's operations and ministries. The contextual analysis includes information about the church's beginnings, local support from individuals and businesses, and the timelines of pastoral leadership. My spiritual growth highlights my secular work and spiritual development that helped to shape me into a pastoral care provider in this setting. This initial chapter detailed how the church had a limited written history; however, I compensated for this by reviewing old documents and photos to build a historical perspective of the church. Additionally, I conducted a plus-delta style meeting in 2023 with long-standing members. From these efforts, I uncovered an underlying "church hurt" that has existed since the early 1980s. This discovery revealed that the congregation had been wounded for decades by various pastoral mistakes, including financial embezzlement, the removal and relocation of the church's cornerstone, and infidelity.

The Ministry Focus chapter shares how I joined the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International (FGBCFI or Fellowship) in 2011. This enabled me to pursue my desires for spiritual awakening and renewal. I was later appointed as a district overseer for churches in the Columbus area. Reading Samuel D. Proctor's book, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, made me realize that I am a valuable asset to lead the context through transformation. My journey has involved various personal challenges, such as life-threatening illness, lack of affirmation for my anointing, physical abuse, infidelity, and

church hurt. Through these experiences, I have been equipped to lead MCCBC in shifting the dynamic interaction into a charismatic worship flow.

Chapter Two, Biblical Foundations, examines the pericope in 1 Kings 18:16-39. The text describes the confrontation at Mount Carmel between the authentic worship of the God of creation and all followers of false religions and deities. The chapter shows how a small, faithful remnant of prophets maintained the presence for worship to a faithful God.[1] The passage highlights the loving embrace that God repeatedly reveals to His covenant people, who are reconciled by being made righteous in His sight.[2] The narrative seems to reflect the messaging used by the founding members of MCCBC.

Although the written history for the context was not available, I spent time imagining what motivated the founding members to choose the church's name. I believe the small band of worshippers faced many "Baals" daily. Today, MCCBC is similarly facing false messaging directed by evil forces, such as disinformation and misinformation on social media platforms and from various news outlets.[3] The chapter describes how false prophecies, betrayals, mistrusts, and other messages have attempted to diminish the church's power, removing hope for the future. The context must rely on its belief that God's sovereignty remains as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago and choose whom they will serve (Josh. 24:15).

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[1] Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with The Apocrypha, Revised Fifth Edition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 529-530.

[2] Julie Baretz, *The Bible on Location: Off the Beaten Path in Ancient and Modern Israel* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 209.

[3] Ephesians 6:12, New Revised Standard Version. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NRSV.

The chapter also describes the social-political background, the Deuteronomistic history, and the key characters within the pericope. The main lesson of this encounter was to bring the people of God back to where they first received the Lord: in their hearts, in their living, and as role models for the nations (communities). The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not a "god" who lives in the things that are the recipients of offerings and prayers, but He is a person-centered God who does not reside in one spot like the local deities that foreign nations worship. God's power is limitless, powerful, and present everywhere a believer goes.

Chapter Three, Historical Foundations, analyzes the Evangelical Revival, the Great Awakenings, and their effects on America's revitalization. The primary historical figure for this doctoral project was Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875 AD). Finney is recognized as one of the most influential revivalists of the nineteenth century and a vital leader of the Second Great Awakening.[4] The chapter also discussed secondary leaders and movements relevant to the project.

This chapter examines other personalities and unique movements of the Spirit of God that were vital in formulating the hypothesis for MCCBC. The chapter details the spiritual transformative awakening essential to leaders and laity. The details include an overview of Finney's spiritual journey. He was a small-town attorney in upstate New York who experienced a profound conversion by the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" in his

[4] Frances FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 37.

law office during 1821. He stated that the Spirit descended on him "in waves and waves of liquid love."[5]

Secondary leaders and movements relevant to the project include William Joseph Seymour (1870-1922 AD), who is accredited as the Azusa Street Revival leader and Charles Harrison Mason (1866-1961 AD), a former Baptist cleric who became one of the founders of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) denomination. Both of these individuals have had a profound impact on me. Their journeys allowed me to feel a sense of affirmation regarding the move of the Spirit upon my life and in leading the context to connect with the spiritual DNA of the Triune God.

Chapter Four, Theological Foundations, explores practical theology as the overarching framework for Pentecostalism and Charismatic theologies that I implemented into the teaching lessons. Historically, the predominantly Black Baptist church operated with a traditional flow of worship style. From the analysis of Chapter Two, I explained how MCCBC demonstrated a level of parallelism with the reasons for the Children of Israel's silence when confronted with their "limping with two different opinions" (1 Kings 18:21). Elijah's confrontation with the state-supported prophets of Baal and Asherah on the mountain was an important narrative for MCCBC, which needs to shift more towards authentic worship that honors the true God. Church renewal is the hope of revitalizing the church when God's people fall into unfaithfulness.[6]

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[5] Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism, Second Edition* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 28.

[6] Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirt: How God Reshapes the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 42.

The chapter details that theology is necessary for the church's life because it helps interpret the story of God, the world, Israel's history, and events that lead to salvation.[7] The chapter explains that theologians use "God-talk" or a language that connects with people. Seeking God through the inspired word is fundamental to Jesus Christ.[8] The Bible tells readers that "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

Chapter Five, Interdisciplinary Foundations, examines transformation theories related to church renewal, the theory of reasoned action, and organizational change theory. A structured and formalized process must be in place for change to occur within an environment. I have spoken with individuals at MCCBC and pastors of other churches asking if they or their parishioners watch charismatic-enriched services. The response was overwhelmingly "Yes!" This informal survey indicates that the church community is currently in a season of renewal.

Chapter Six, Project Analysis, presents the research results from testing the hypothesis related to the identified problem at MCCBC. The project training symposium included seven sessions for volunteers who enrolled and participated. It was conducted through both in-person contact and virtual presentations with volunteer participants. The data collection was based on qualitative research methods, including pre-project and post-project questionnaires, journaling assignments, and one-on-one interviews. I focused on

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[7] Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology, Third Edition* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 2.

[8] Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1915.

implementing a symposium of several learning objectives, such as spiritual disciplines, intercessory prayer, and skills for managing change.

The project results helped me initiate conative changes in the leaders attending the symposium. Several insights emerged from the collected qualitative data. The findings indicated that providing targeted educational training about the charismata and its role in the local church effectively equips leadership to educate members about the Spirit's presence and involvement in church ministry. The movement of the Spirit in one of the sessions created a powerful moment, not only for the individual who experienced the awakening, but also for each participant and the contextual associates who felt the Spirit's move. Notable was the incorporation of a 100-Day Listening Prayer and Fasting period I believed was crucial in saturating the atmosphere with the Spirit as the church prepared for its centennial celebration. This inspired the clergy and other leaders to sustain intercessory prayer each Sunday. It has continued to this day.

These chapters have collectively led me to guide MCCBC toward a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit.[9] They emphasize that intentional church renewal revitalizes the church when God's people enter an "unfaithful state of existence."[10] God is continually reshaping, renewing, and refreshing His church, including MCCBC, at various stages in history, to always pursue what is good and to give thanks to God.

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[9] David Young, *Theology for the Charismatic Church* (Woodbridge, VA: Crown Trust Books, 2023), 6.

[10] Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 43.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

This chapter summarizes my spiritual autobiography, contextual analysis, and the ministry journey, illustrating how they converged with the needs of my ministry context. The analysis showed how the evaluation and my journey connected to the project. My leadership skills and research abilities revealed how God used me as a conduit, demonstrating how the "outpouring of the Holy Spirit" (Joel 2:28-29)[1] flowed upon the context and allowed the Holy Spirit to lead, guide, direct, and influence the project's ultimate success.[2]

The Black church has never come together for worship without being mindful of its "liberation theology."[3] It has always been aware of the imperfect status of liberty that is meant to be enjoyed. The Black church has rarely been locked into a narrow conservatism and fundamentalism that excluded other groups.[4] However, the traditions of

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NRSV.

[2] Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with The Apocrypha, Revised Fifth Edition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1295.

[3] Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, Second Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 183.

[4] Melva W. Costen, *African American Christian Worship, Second Edition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 4-8.

the Baptist church have often served dogmas rather than experiencing the movement of the Holy Spirit. When the church comes together, the gathered community looks to their faith in celebrating the hope of eternal life, responding to an invitation from God.[5] Accordingly, the liberation theory and the exodus themes of the Bible help the community overcome oppressive environments. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." The universal church is in the midst of spiritual renewal.

Church renewal is the hope of revitalizing the church when God's people fall into an unfaithful state of existence. This renewal is needful, especially in light of declining attendance in youth and young adults. Many individuals of the Baby Boomer generation are reluctant to heed God's warnings about spurning youth, (Matt. 19:14). God has been at work "renewing and refreshing" the church throughout history. For example, the Azusa Street Mission Revival and Evangelical Revivalism theories suggest that God's sovereignty periodically renews the church by "outbreaks of revival."[6] When God sees fit, He sends His Spirit to move and bring us together to seek Him in a mighty and profound way to get faith in waves of conversions.[7] Revivals are generally evidenced through signs of prayer, repentance, conversions, and other manifestations through the Holy Spirit, as referenced in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 (gifts) and 1 Corinthians 14:2 (prayer language).

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[5] Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2021), 50.

[6] Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 42.

[7] Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 42.

J. Edwin Orr described a series of "evangelical awakenings" that have operated throughout history. Orr viewed the "awakening and revival as virtually the same: the movement of the Holy Spirit brought about the revival of the New Testament Christianity and in the church and community."[8] Additionally, Perry Miller summarized Jonathan Edwards'view of the Great Awakening in America as experiencing it through a "pulsation of special seasons interspersed with exhaustion and backsliding."[9] Due to these identifiable seasons experienced in the context, the church must implement a devoted, determined, and dedicated prayer culture to bring back "the Glory Cloud" experienced on Mount Sinai (Exod. 34:29-35). In the text, God's glory appeared as a cloud or pillar of fire. The cloud came down on Mount Sinai and filled the Tabernacle: this presence is found in the God-man — Jesus.

Context

Stambaugh Avenue Mount Carmel Baptist Church and Community Center, also known as Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church (MCCBC), is a predominantly Black Baptist church located at 608 Stambaugh Avenue, Columbus, Ohio, 43207. Mount Carmel is primarily a Sunday morning church, with weekly services on Wednesday evenings for prayer meetings and Saturday mornings for Bible studies. The church averages seventy-five in-person individuals for Sunday morning worship services with another seventy-five-to-100 who attend virtually on Facebook and the church's free conference call line. About 85% of the members are over fifty-five years old. During the

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[8] Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit*, 43.

[9] Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York, NY: William Sloane Associates, 1949), 315-316.

height of the coronavirus, the church also aired via a low-powered-frequency FM channel for those who wanted to be near the church but exercised a more conservative approach to social distancing.

MCCBC is primarily governed by the Baptist Articles of Faith, the church's Constitution and By-Laws, and the Baptist Church Covenant. The church operates autonomously but is aligned with various local Baptist associations, including the Eastern Union Missionary Baptist Association, the Baptist Ministerial Alliances of Columbus and Vicinity, and the Baptist Pastors' Conference of Columbus and Vicinity. These local organizations have strong ties to the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., one of the nation's largest Black Baptist denominations.

Written church history was minimal; however, I had to glean through many documents and pictures to develop a historical perspective of the church. Additionally, I held a "Timeline Potluck" in November 2023. Included in the timeline discussion was the church historian, who joined in 1942. This gathering also helped establish a cultural atmosphere within the church, enabling a better understanding of its past and a look toward its future. I focused, with careful observation, on not excluding responses from the "invisible" people such as retirees, fundamentalist and charismatic Christians, single female head-of-households, and LGBTQ+ individuals. This timeline exercise was also announced to encourage participation as the church prepared for its 100-year celebration in 2025.

Some of the individuals who have been a part of the church since the 1940s shared how MCCBC was the "church of choice" – an oasis – for Blacks moving to Columbus from the South. I received many comments, primarily from baby boomers,

who stated they had been members at the church. Many of these south siders were part of the Great Migration movement from southern states in search of better economic and political opportunities unavailable in the South.[10] The city's growth benefitted from the wartime industrial expansion (World Wars I and II, the Korean Conflict), the Black press, and family ties. Many of the Blacks were "pushed" from the South due to systematic racism and discrimination, political disfranchisement, and anti-Black violence.[11] An article entitled "Shaping the Promised Land: The Great Migration Comes to Columbus" reported how labor agents working for large companies enticed Blacks to move north with the offer of higher wages.[12] These recruitment efforts were to address the labor shortages resulting from wars. The shortages were expected to last through and beyond the wars. Blacks were identified as a great resource of "raw material that was not yet fully utilized."[13]

MCCBC's Beginning

The church was started in the early 1920s in the home of a faithful, married couple who lived in a small house in the 400 block of Stambaugh Avenue. This dedicated group of seven called themselves The Community Mission (TCM). This small

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[10] Eric Arnesen, *Black Protest and the Great Migration* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Matins, 2003), 2.

[11] Arnesen, *Black Protest and the Great Migration*, 2.

[12] Matthew I. Doran, "Shaping the Promised Land: The Great Migration Comes to Columbus, Ohio," Published by Teaching Columbus.org, 1, https://www.teachingcolumbus.org/the-great-migration-comes-to-columbus.html.

[13] R. H. Leavell, "Negro Migration in 1916-17," Published by the United States Department of Labor, Division of Negro Economics, 1919, 28, https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/files/docs/ publications/dne /dne_migration1916-1917.pdf.

congregation invited others from the surrounding area to join the church. Men who attended the church worked at the Buckeye Steel Casting Company steel mill (operated from 1881 until its close in 2016), a few blocks from Stambaugh on Parsons Avenue. Over a period of time, officials from Buckeye Steel learned of this select group worshipping in one of the worker's homes. These officials joined together and donated the current 1.4-acre plot of land for these individuals to erect a church. As the TCM congregation began to outgrow the home, the Buckeye Steel officials became involved again by donating a small house near the donated plot. They also assisted the members with contributions to help fund the future church building. The construction of the building began in 1928 and was completed in 1929.

In 1925, the gathered community changed its name to the Stambaugh Avenue Mount Carmel Baptist Church and Community Center. During this time, the first pastor was called to pastor the church. The first pastor briefly moved out of state during the early 1930's. So, the congregation elected the chairman of the board of erection committee as its second pastor. However, he abruptly left the congregation. No dates or reasoning for his departure were recorded. An ordained minister and church member served as the first interim pastor. The first pastor returned to the church in 1934 and was immediately re-appointed to serve as its pastor until he died in 1940. Not much information was available regarding his leadership or preaching style.

In 1940, the third pastor was called to MCCBC. The church's historian stated that this pastor was an "old-timey" pastor who was an excellent "hooper and holler."[14] She

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[14] Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church, "Timeline Potluck," Interview of Church Historian, November 4, 2023.

said, “he could pray the horns off of a billy goat.” The third pastor was an authoritative leader who controlled the church’s decision-making processes. He remained pastor until his retirement in 1978. He was named “pastor emeritus” after his retirement.

The fourth pastor was called to MCCBC from 1978 until 1984. During his pastorate, he faced several obstacles. He initially sought to build a brand-new church building, citing that the existing structure was too small based on his experience as a construction owner. However, the church believed it did not have the necessary funds for this endeavor. Despite this concern, the congregation had a more significant opposition against him, ultimately leading the church to split.

During a timeline discussion I had with several older members, it was revealed that the church leaders discovered that the fourth pastor was not “well-versed” or “well-educated.”[15] The members recalled how he often spoke in confusing, broken English and mischaracterized the meanings of scripture. Their comments suggested he did not exegete the text based on a careful, objective analysis but offered an eisegetical preaching style of scriptural passages. As these concerns permeated the congregation, the church voted to end his pastorate in 1984. The fourth pastor and several members left MCCBC to form a new church. This newly formed congregation moved into a vacant church building about three-quarters a mile north of MCCBC.

MCCBC sued the fourth pastor and the new church for the discovery of illegal confiscation of church property, such as equipment, contributions, and removing the cornerstone from the Stambaugh building without compensation. A judge hearing the

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[15] Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church, “Timeline Potluck,” Interview of Focus Group of Seven Persons, November 4, 2023.

case shared that he could not render a judgment due to the lack of a recorded church constitution and by-laws. The judge directed the parties to discuss their complaints with the appropriate Baptist Association. The church historian shared that the Association provided no resolution acceptable to the church. None of the items taken were ever returned to the church. The former pastor erected the cornerstone on the grassy area in front of the newly formed church as a "monument" where it remains. The church hired an attorney to prepare and file a constitution and by-laws in 1984 before the election of their next pastor.

The remnant at MCCBC elected a fifth pastor in 1984. The pastor was known as a gifted teacher and innovator of biblical lessons, which the church had not previously experienced. However, due to a "move of the Spirit" upon this pastor's life, he shared with the congregation he wanted to step away from the conservative Baptist view that spiritual gifts no longer remain available to the church or that its operations have ceased.[16] However, the church leadership would not move away from this dogma. Consequently, he left MCCBC in 1993 and formed a new church.

From 1993 until 1999, the sixth pastor was called and helped to direct the church in erecting a new building on the existing lot during his tenure. This new building was necessary because the City of Columbus' Building Code Enforcement Department condemned the old church building in 1995. The church immediately began worshiping in a nearby high school gymnasium for about two years while raising funds and securing financing. The construction of the building was completed in 1997. This created an

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[16] Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, n.d., Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, https://www.fullgospelbaptist.org.

opportunity for newness and hope for a forward and progressing church environment. The initial service was on Sunday, June 8, 1997. Inscribed on the new cornerstone of the church is Genesis 18:14, “Is there anything too hard for the Lord?” The church historian fondly remembered this time of celebration. However, those moments of gladness were short-lived.

The deacons confronted the pastor in 1998 with several allegations of infidelity with women of the church that had been brought to their attention. This situation was coupled with the discovery of fraudulent use of construction funds. The missing funds were to construct classrooms on the west side of the building to create a daycare, which never came to fruition. Meetings were held with the Association’s moderator and various Baptist Pastors’ Conference clergy. However, the church rejected both groups’ proposals to retain the pastor. The pastor was eventually removed from the pastorate at MCCBC. As a result, rumors began to spread among sister Baptist churches that MCCBC was a “den of vipers” who did not believe in forgiveness. An ordained preacher who was a church member was appointed the interim pastor in 1999. He served until I was elected senior pastor in 2002.

My Election as Pastor at MCCBC

Several clergy and pastors called me upon their knowledge of my selection as the new pastor. They warned me not to accept the position. The consensus was that the church was occupied by “mean and hateful” people. This information was unsolicited by me. Many of the comments were from persons with whom I did not have a prior relationship. As a result, I called my pastor for advice.

My pastor shared that I should accept the pastorate of this church. He told me that when I get there, "love on the people." I felt this advice was too rudimentary, so I asked about the next step. The old pastor who pastored for nearly thirty-five years said, "Continue to love on them some more." Again, I felt these nuggets of advice were too simplistic, so I asked one more time. The old pastor replied, "Just keep on loving them." The senior pastor's response was reminiscent of Eli telling Samuel to adhere to the Lord's calling (1 Sam. 3:1-10). He further explained that the concept of love may seem simple but is needful because of the "church hurt." The people had been badly wounded. They needed a "bleeding-heart" pastor who could hear and honor God in loving His sheep.

I reflected on the old pastor's meaning of a "bleeding heart," which is a person who is burdened by the things that weigh on the people under their watch (2 Cor. 11:28). In other words, this kind of pastor is a person who is compassionate and empathetic to the needs of others. After reflection, I began this pastorate as the senior pastor of MCCBC on Sunday, February 3, 2002.

Ministry Journey

My educational and professional development is filled with good and bad, loving, and hurtful experiences. I realized through reading Samuel Proctor's book that he is a valuable participant in the "substance of things hoped for" by the transforming power of Jesus, the object of his faith.[17] Reflections and discussions with family members provided

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[17] Samuel D. Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 144.

evidence of God's providence amid painful memories. I am constantly aware of the awesomeness of God in helping me sort through the "spiritual dimensions of my life from all of the other dimensions."[18]

My ministry journey began on the day of my birth in 1955. I was diagnosed at birth with a potentially dangerous condition called "hemolytic disease of the newborn," which is commonly referred to as "Rh factor." According to the Stanford Medical Children's Health website, this condition occurs when the blood types of the mother and the child do not match.[19] Before the 1960s, there was no medication available to prevent mothers from becoming sensitized to their child's blood cells. More than half of the fetuses and newborns with Rh disease died, according to the Columbia University Irving Medical Center's website.[20] Due to God's divine intervention, I survived and did not experience any associated complications.

My family roots are from the "red clay" of Alabama, where my parents were born and raised. My father (born in 1929 and died in 1993) was a Baptist and a deacon in the churches he attended. He was born in Butler, Alabama, on a twenty-acre farm. My father lived in a two-parent home; he was the twelfth of fourteen children. According to my mother, my father graduated from high school but was considered an average student. After high school, he enlisted in the Army and served during the Korean War. He was

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[18] Richard Peace. *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), 58.

[19] Stanford Medicine Children's Health, n.d., "Rh Disease," Stanford Medicine Children's Health, https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=rh-disease-90-P02498.

[20] Columbia University Irving Medical Center, 2020, "Globally, Only Half of Women Get Treatment for Rh Disease," https://www.cuimc.columbia.edu/news/globally-only-half-women-get-treatment-preventable-killer-newborns.

honorably discharged after three years, serving mainly in the States. He married his high school sweetheart and moved to Columbus, Ohio, in the mid-1950s for better employment opportunities. He worked primarily as a machine press operator.

My mother was born in 1930 in Myrtlewood, Alabama, on a fifteen-acre farm. Her married parents had seven children together (two boys and five girls) and raised all of their children, including the father's oldest child (a female), born out of wedlock. My mother is a vibrant, quick-witted ninety-five-year-old who shares with everyone that she is "just a precious little old lady on medication." She did not live with her siblings throughout her school days due to their age gaps. After high school, she attended Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University), where she successfully graduated as a registered nurse in three years. She worked at a couple of Columbus hospitals until an unfortunate hospital incident forced her to retire in the early 1960's. While working in the hospital nursery on her night shift, an apparatus exploded and severed the nerve endings in her right arm. She underwent several surgeries over several years. Fortunately, she regained the usefulness of her arm but could never recover any measurable sensitivity. The hospital did not offer her permanent disability but presented an option to cover all medical needs related to her arm, which she accepted. She became a homemaker from that time forward. I later asked whether she considered suing the hospital for her injuries. She said, "No, the Lord will provide."

My maternal and paternal families have a strong agricultural, timber, fish farmers, and wood mill workers lineage. Christian virtues primarily fashioned the commonality between these families. None of the legacy parents were ministers, but they were deacons and teachers.

My immediate family consists of six persons, including my parents, three brothers, and myself. I am the second oldest child. My oldest brother is nineteen months older, while my two other brothers are twelve-months and forty-seven months younger, respectively. Although the brothers have the same parents, I was treated differently than my brothers as a youth. It was often said that I was adopted or was "found in a trash can." These comments were fueled by speculation concerning my physical appearance, which did not align with my parents' or brothers' features. I was the only child born with a lighter skin complexion. As a youth, I also had freckles and reddish-brown hair and was born with an extra digit (tiny finger) on each hand. These issues profoundly affected me, as I felt I had to overcome the oppressive and mentally challenging living environment. I felt my home was not a refugee for me. I wanted to be liberated, but no one seemed to rescue me.

Some milestones, setbacks, and awakenings that occurred during my spiritual journey include the touch of God in my life as a twelve-year-old. However, I ran from God due to the uncertainty, accountability, and responsibility of leading God's people. The book, *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story*, states, "Many of us are better at running away from God than welcoming God."[21] This was true for me. I ran primarily due to inconsistencies displayed by the ones I most loved and admired in my life: my father and mother.

During the days of my youth, my father drank alcoholic beverages: beer during the week and hard liquors on weekends. On one occasion, I had a vivid memory of how I was beaten on a particular weekend as an eight-year-old. My father was watching a

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[21] Peace, *Spiritual Autobiography*, 85.

baseball game and began drinking with one of his nephews, who was one year his junior. While I was in the next room doing a school project, my father suddenly appeared unannounced where I was sitting. He proceeded to whip me with a strap that was so violent that it caused severe bruising and welts on my legs, stomach, and back. The results of this unprovoked encounter caused me to have a fever that lasted two days. I could not wear pants for four days after that whipping. One of the scars from that dreadful incident did not disappear until well into adulthood. My mother was incensed by my father's actions. However, she refused to take me to the hospital, fearing my father would be investigated and arrested. On many other occasions, I received similar unwarranted and unfair treatment. However, the whippings never seemed to approach the severity of the one described earlier.

I confronted my father about this whipping episode when I was twenty-four. I wanted to overcome this hatred I had for my father. I asked my father to discuss this with me in a neutral place away from the house. We went to a school parking lot about ten minutes from the home. When I shared the incident, my father stated that he had no memory of this situation. I recalled that his head was bowed down (probably in shame) during the entire discussion, never looking up. After several quiet moments, he apologized and I accepted his apology.

Later, I surmised that most of the whippings were mainly the result of malicious rumors. This seemed to have been supported by my father's oldest brother, who stated "emphatically" that I was the child of a "white doctor" because of my physical characteristics. My father considered his brother a "father figure" since he was about twenty-five years his senior. Many of my father's brothers and sisters continued to treat

my brothers differently from the way I was treated. I was mostly ignored when gifts, lovely expressions, and compliments were given due to the hurtful mistrust of my suspected paternity.

My mother was a "behind-the-scenes" benefactor to her husband's efforts. For example, during the early 1970s, my father was promoted to supervisor at his factory job, probably due to the company's fears of affirmative action. This was particularly relevant for employers who contracted with the federal government or otherwise received federal funds, as they were required to document their affirmative-action practices and metrics, as defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.[22] Many nights, I recalled my mother typing and preparing my father's letters, memoranda, and schedules to meet his work mandates. As a child, I was often curious whether my father could do this type of work. After about one year as a supervisor, he was permanently laid off.

My mother never directly shared any information regarding my father's challenges as a supervisor. However, upon further reflection, I believe he had a learning disability, similar to the observation I feel about two of my brothers. But despite this situation, my father knew the Bible and could recite obscure verses immediately. He read his Bible religiously every morning and night.

When I accepted the call to ministry at thirty-five years old, my father expressed his affirmation of this acceptance. Many years of healing, understanding, and acceptance had occurred by this time. My father immediately became a mentor and supporter of my

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[22] U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d., "Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/titlevii.cfm.

ministry until his death. Despite the past traumatic events, I loved my father more and more each day.

My parents wanted their children to “love one another and never hate the other.” In particular, my mother shared stories of other siblings who grew up hating one another and finding no resolutions to their differences. She often referenced Cain and Abel’s story and their struggles. My mother firmly believed in traditional teachings of scripture such as “carry each other’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2), “turn the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39), and “love one another” unconditionally (John 15:12). She seemed to believe strongly in such adages as “you go along to get along” and “do not ruffle feathers.” Accordingly, her acceptance and affirmation of me being a pastor “stretched” her beyond her belief systems. I believe that my mother supports my ministry. She serves as one of the mothers in my context. She sees my commitment to God, family, and the church. However, she does not affirm my spiritual gifts. However, some of her apprehension may be tied to my “wilderness walk.”

I am a life-long learner. I love school and consider it a challenge to wrestle through tough subjects — as a problem solver. I received scholarship offers from various public and private colleges and universities, including Dartmouth, Brown, Yale, and Princeton. My high school counselor (a white female and former Navy officer) said I was an “exceptionally talented student.” However, my family's response and attitude did not affirm this assessment. Throughout my junior and senior high school days, I was offered opportunities to attend private schools on full academic scholarships, including room and board. However, my parents declined all offers when the school counselor contacted them about these opportunities. Several of these institutions continued to make these

offers for several years. However, my parents continued to refuse all offers. When I inquired about their decisions, the parents insisted that if one of the children attended, all had to participate. My mother mainly generated this response. She stated she "loved all of her children the same." She believed that no one should gain an advantage over the other. Their children were prohibited from bragging or discussing achievements, accomplishments, or opportunities. The treatment was to be the same, no matter the cost (or loss) to the other. At that time, I could not understand the beginning of their decision. However, I tried to remain focused throughout my secondary education. I eventually graduated third in my high school graduating class and was a member of the National Honor Society.

Sports allowed me an avenue to de-stress and decompress from the strains I felt as a child. As a teenager, I was fast for my size and possessed excellent hand-eye coordination. As a high schooler, I was named to the All-City and All-District basketball, football, and track teams. During my senior year, I was named to the All-Ohio and All-American track teams. Due to my athletic successes, I received a surprise visit from the renowned Woodrow ("Woody") Wayne Hayes, the coach at The Ohio State University (OSU), who attended my senior year athletic banquet. He offered me a football scholarship, but I turned it down because I had already accepted a full academic engineering scholarship at OSU. The coach then countered by getting me to be a "preferred walk-on" with the team, which I accepted.

My studies at OSU lasted from 1973 until 1978; however, I failed to graduate due to several unfortunate events. First, I suffered severe injuries to my knees that required significant reconstructive surgeries while playing football. After I realized my dreams of

playing professional football were no longer an option, I married my high school sweetheart. I continued to pursue my education at OSU while my wife worked. However, after a month of marriage, my wife wanted to end the marriage: she had engaged in infidelity with another man. This discovery shocked and overwhelmed me so much that I began seeing a psychologist. After two sessions, I attended the next session with my wife, but to no avail. She wanted out of the marriage. During the next two months, I lost over seventy pounds. I felt that my life was spiraling out of control, with no "hope," contrary to the "substance of things hoped for" by the transforming power of Jesus.[23]

After the court approved the dissolution of the marriage, I continued attending school but lost focus. I proceeded to flunk out of OSU on three different occasions. I lost my rhythms of spiritual disciplines, study habits, intentional practices, and focus. I struggled to usher in the truth of who I was representing. I began asking questions such as, "Was I representing myself, or was it God?" Due to this difficulty, I stopped reading my Bible and attending church. I felt that God had abandoned me. The years of attending Sunday School, morning worship, Baptist Training Union, and Sunday evening church services were all for naught. So, I turned my attention to hanging out at discothèques, bars, house parties, and other non-church activities.

Amid my "wilderness walk," I engaged in a life of fornication with several women. Unfortunately, I made dreadful decisions and life-long errors as I became the father of two babies, with two different mothers, who would deliver a daughter and son, respectively, within ten months of each other. I shared this news with my parents and brothers, unaware of how they would respond. My parents had a rather staunch Christian

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[23] Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 144.

view on everything. My father took the news better than the mother. She did not express her feelings to me for several weeks.

I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force Reserves in 1980, which required a two-year full-time commitment plus a four-year reservist period. I felt this was necessary to help regain my balance and address financial obligations for child support. This part of my journey allowed me to realign my priorities. This God-inspired "walk about" – a short period of purposeful wandering – helped me regain the compass I had previously lost. I enrolled at Franklin University in late 1982 and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting in 1985.

I accepted my call to the ministry in June 1990 when I delivered my initial sermon, "A Prescription for a Sin Sick World." The text was 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If My people who are called by My name . . ." After receiving strong acceptance of the sermon, my pastor felt that I could deliver a discourse to the regular body of the church. After a similar receptivity to the second sermon, I visited the pastor to express "my readiness" for ordination. The pastor immediately shared with me that he did not understand what I was requesting. The pastor shared, "You can't even crawl, but now you feel ready to walk?" I left the pastor's house feeling mad and heartbroken. I continued to go to church but was inwardly angry with the pastor because (ignorantly) I thought the pastor was not listening to the people. The "people" said I was ready. After about two years and some mellowing, I attended a Lutheran seminary to begin a more profound development of my theological foundation. This gave me another perspective of what my pastor tried to share regarding my unreadiness.

In 1991, I enrolled at the University of Cincinnati, earning a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in Finance and Information Systems in 1993. In 2022, a former recruiter for the United Theological Seminary contacted me about attending the school. I enrolled in Spring 2022 and graduated in 2023 with a Master of Ministry degree. I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree at United.

I began my professional career in the secular world as a banker from 1985 through 2021 and worked in various capacities in banking, including but not limited to, a credit analyst, loan review administrator, financial controller, credit policy development manager, non-profit lending manager, regional and senior loan secretary, and commercial underwriter for loans up to $1 billion. As an officer, I reached the position of senior vice president.

I served in a bi-vocational status for about nineteen years when I began serving as the senior pastor of a Baptist church in Columbus in 2002. I have spiritual gifts in teaching and impartation. Over the years, I have served as a Sunday School teacher, youth leader, outreach director, assistant to the pastor, youth church pastor, and in other volunteer activities (church and non-church). I also served as an adjunct professor at an Ohio Christian-based university for eleven years (2005-2016).

My educational pursuits have assisted me in developing various workshops and training programs over the years. Some of these secular and religious programs and worships include, but are not limited to, Personal and Small Business Training; Church Workshops on How to Deal with the five C's of Credit (character, cash flow, collateral, conditions, and capacity; to assess a borrower's creditworthiness); Personal Financial Empowerment Workshops; How to Lend to Churches training program for lenders;

FGBCFI training programs for District churches on Ministerial Ethics, How to Recognize God's Voice, and the Law of Influence.

I spent the first seven years of my pastorate trying to become the de facto leader of the congregation. Every move I made was challenged. For example, after one month as the pastor, I received an unstamped, unsigned letter from an elderly parishioner; I assumed it was because they referenced that they needed to leave by a specific time to take their medication. The letter suggested that my teaching style, such as three-point sermons and text illustrations, was not what I was asked to do. Also, "it does not take an hour to do a sermon." That letter was later confiscated from my office, but it reminded me of my misunderstanding of the level of "church hurt" the congregation had experienced. During this time of my pastorate, many members still spoke of the third pastor (who served thirty-eight years) as if he were still alive and pastoring the church.

Seeking a deeper understanding of how to lead the church, I joined the FGBCFI in 2011. The Fellowship is not a denomination, but a movement led by the Holy Spirit to lead other Baptist pastors to separate from the conservative Baptist view that spiritual gifts no longer remain available to the church or that its operations have ceased.[24] FGBCFI has a doctrine that is similar to that of the traditional Baptist ethos. However, there are two core doctrinal differences whereby it accepts women as clergy and their view on the gifts of the Spirit. This is a shift in the paradigm of the worship in FGBCFI. While traditional Baptist churches are governed theologically by the Articles of Faith, the Fellowship churches additionally ascribe to the Full Gospel Distinctives. Since then, I

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[24] Paul S. Morton, *Changing Forward: Experiencing God's Unlimited Power* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 83.

have desired to allow the awakening of spiritual renewal to occur freely in my context in "praise and worship." I serve as a District overseer of seven participating churches in the Columbus area.

I have experienced the need for further growth and development in navigating the church through challenges and opportunities. Joshua 1:8 says, "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous." I believe that to succeed, I must pursue new methods while carefully not pouring "new wine in old skins" (Mark 2:22). This is a significant opportunity to enhance, engage, and equip my local context for the future. I seek to continually expand my knowledge and skills in addressing my development as a senior pastor and theologian for the local context. Recognizing that the church is much more than a physical building, it is imperative and vital to effectively prepare and deliver within the context of a renewed and refreshed church environment that embraces the *Missio Dei*.

I led MCCBC in developing a five-year strategic plan in 2018-2019. The plan was entitled "Renew, Refresh, Ignite." The church participated in an S.W.O.T. analysis (also referred to as Plus Delta analysis). This exercise was used to help the church understand why the "pulse" was critical in understanding what makes the gathered community at MCCBC a significant place of worship – because they have a caring, family-generated culture. From this analysis, I developed the "Seven Cs of the Church":

1. Culture: Season of relationship.
2. Compliance: Accountability and responsibility.
3. Competence: Intentional training.

4. Collaboration: Working with church and non-church volunteers and community partners.
5. Content: Be the "expert.
6. Capital: Continue or become faithful givers, planting "first fruits" (Deut. 23:19).
7. Change: Be open to stretching beyond current territories. Ignite opportunities to spark imagination in the church.

This planning effort allowed the people to experience my skills in assessing the church's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The Holy Spirit led me to realize I could not "force-feed" the FGBCFI concepts into the context as the fifth pastor had tried to do.

Another planning effort was done in 2020 in response to review changes in the church relative to COVID-19 concerns. The plan was called "Navigating From the Now to the Next to the New" (N^3), as was provided by the FGBCFI at the annual conference that year. The conference held open dialog to assist churches in overcoming disruptions like COVID. For example, the church leadership should give themselves permission to discover and discuss new strategies through the direction of the Holy Spirit to focus them in "this season." I shared with the church the need to recognize the church is experiencing a "new normal." If the church returns to the "normal" before COVID-19, it will participate in the old habits and practices of doing church. MCCBC's flow of worship before COVID lasted two-plus hours. However, establishing a new normal means a "normalcy" that restores rhythms and relationships found in the gathering together as a church again. Since the N^3-focused group meeting, MCCBC has altered its flow of worship based on in-person, Facebook Live, and free conference call lines. The in-person and conference line worship start at 10:15 AM, and the Facebook goes live at 10:25 AM. Service now ends at 11:15 AM, except for the Lord's Supper, when the time extends to

11:30 AM. The order of worship is now focused on a journey in God's presence: (God gathers/invites His people to be in His presence); of hearing from God's Word (God speaks to His people); that celebrates Christ (the Table and other elements which empower their response); and sends us into the world to witness, changed by our encounter with God (after the benediction).[25]

During the potluck activity, I recognized how I had assisted the church in overcoming issues of hurt and lack of pastoral integrity that impacted the senior sages of the context, such as fidelity issues, theft, embezzlement, lawsuits, lack of support, or covering from Baptist associations, etc. My reflection over my twenty-year pastorate has shown that I have implemented and utilized appropriate ministerial ethics to allow the congregation to see that the Lord orders the "steps of a good man" (Ps. 37:23). The man God chooses is "not down for long if he should stumble, for God has a grip on his hand" (Ps. 37:24). Accordingly, the psychological wounds within the congregational context have been overcome. However, the context needs to develop new membership recruitment methods that target youth and young adults, single-parent heads of households, and other uniquely identified groups.

Develop the Synergy

The church is to remember the Christ event in our worship services, which is the more significant act of salvation (life, death, resurrection, and ascension): the object of worship is Jesus Christ. The content of prayer is the story of Jesus Christ.[26] This action

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[25] Cherry, *The Worship Architect*, 59.

[26] Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, 17.

connects us to the covenantal relationship between God and His people.[27] Christ chooses the gathered community as His people, and Christ is the High Priest (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Due to the covenantal relationship with God, the church should not compromise its core traditions and essential acts in worshipping the Triune God. Worship should maintain crucial elements such as praying, singing, preaching of the Word, shouting, and communal fellowship.[28]

I incorporated a schematic or "prayer circuits" in the hearts of the congregants so that the church's DNA is connected to the Trinitarian God. The wiring of the context should be connected throughout their homes, the church, the community, and the "outermost parts of the world." The church has ecclesiastical authority to fight against demonic powers because the people are made in His image. The church has an established fellowship and relationship with God. I began to focus on the "hard wiring" to hear from God more clearly. The Holy Spirit regularly communicates with God's people through their spirit with the assigned mandates. The New Testament covenant relationship with Jesus Christ gives the people of God a Mediator, a High Priest, who mediates salvation through the connection of the Holy Spirit. As I engaged in the project, I needed to pursue new relevant methods in creating a revival movement in the context while being careful not to pour "new wine in old skins" (Mark 2:22). This was a significant opportunity for me to establish the N^3.

The new method incorporated concepts from Rodgers Neighborhood Basketball, Inc. (RNB), which my son founded in 2006. I served as a board member. My son is a

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[27] Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, 20.

[28] Costen, *African American Christian Worship*, 29.

former NBA and international professional who aimed to address violence prevention and community awareness issues on the east side of Columbus, Ohio. I played a key role in nurturing my son's passion for supporting and making an impact on those in need. Throughout the development of the RNB programs, the principles of giving and leadership continued to shape and direct the organization's community support efforts.

RNB established an annual community classic using the game of basketball as its focus, drawing participants of all ages to engage in various activities. The Friday through Saturday events (usually a weekend in late June) included three-on-three shootouts, all-star games, and celebrity focus events among the featured events. Throughout the year, RNB held other sponsored events that helped engage and connect with at-risk community youths. Events included skills camps, charter school basketball leagues, and mental health awareness sessions, among the varied experiences provided to help respond to the identified needs of RNB's participants. Other periodic activities included school supply giveaways, barbershop hair cutting for boys/girls, and preparation of Thanksgiving meals. Community collaborations with schools, mental health organizations, local law enforcement groups, fire departments, and elected officials helped RNB deliver impactful events for nearly a decade (2006-2015). At the height of its existence, the event drew over 10,000 participants and visitors.

The flagship events became known in the community and were locally recognized as a significant factor and contributor to violence prevention in the east and south sides of Columbus. Specifically, during one of the final years of RNB, it was reported in the City's crime reports that there were no incidents of criminal activity during the weekend of RNB programming. RNB had focused on the events of that year as the "Day of

Peace." I believe elements of RNB's activities can be incorporated to help the church grew, with a particular focus on youth and young adults.

I stand on the rampart to ". . . watch to see . . .." God's replies to the situation (Hab. 2:1). God has shared with me that there is a vision; wait — "it will surely come; it will not delay!" (Hab. 2:3). I have discovered I need to concentrate on what the Triune God wanted me to find, develop, and implement in this project. In my spiritual autobiography, I shared that I have experienced deep pain and suffering. As God had prospered me in my spiritual growth, I am a "survivor" of the deep pains and troubles that I experienced with my parents, brothers, family, infidelity with women, and church hurt. The prophet Isaiah foreshadowed the coming Savior as one who would be "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3). As a survivor, I am well equipped to help the context overcome oppressive hurts and pains.

I am equipped to help the people know how the traditional church can move from conventional forms of worship to the normalcy of a spirit-filled worship experience whereby the corporate worship ushers in the power of the Holy Spirit. I have found that the only way to accomplish this is through the presence of the Holy Spirit amid the people through prayer and fasting. The congregation must begin to implement the spiritual disciplines of prayer to begin to experience the move of the Holy Spirit in the service, their lives, and their communities. There is no other way to experience the move of God in miraculous ways except to prepare the body of Christ to receive the supernatural. The church must abide in faith. The text in 2 Corinthians 5:7 says we must "walk by faith, not by sight." Many do not believe, and many doubt. They settle for regular traditional worship, and some leaders and congregants are not ready or

experienced enough to go beyond their faith. My research has shown and must continue show them how to get there and provide the steps necessary for the body of Christ – all denominations – to connect to the Spirit realm and hear God. The "Glory Cloud" can remain if the church embraces the Spirit's presence in God's mission.

The next chapter examines the pericope from 1 Kings 18:16-39. God desires His people, the "called out ones," to return to authentic worship. We must stop "limping around" indecisively, following other "gods" and commit to the one true God and His wisdom, power, might, and glory.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Take Us Back to Where We First Received You

MCCBC must transform from a traditional worship format to a more charismatic, spirit-led worship environment. If the church's leadership and laity were trained and educated on church renewal and revitalization efforts, then the context would be more relevantly equipped to recognize and participate in the Holy Spirit's move in the Missio Dei. Therefore, developing a schematic or "prayer circuit" is planned.

The hearts of MCCBC's congregants are planned to be linked to a prayer circuit that will align their DNA with the Trinitarian God. Incorporating a more relevant prayer circuit in the context will help the congregation engage in its ecclesiastical authority to fight against demonic powers. The church has an established fellowship and relationship with God. However, the contextual traditions have been serving more of the church's dogmas rather than experiencing the movement of the Holy Spirit. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jer. 29:11) Establishing a "hard-wiring" prayer circuit to hear God more clearly is critical.

The plan is to confront the context with the need to navigate from the "now to the next to the new" (N^3). A strategic initiative plan is being developed from a training I was introduced to at an annual FGBCFI conference several years ago. This training was

taught to Fellowship churches to assist them in overcoming disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic. The context needs to look for a "new" normal. If the church returns to the "normal" worship it engaged in before the pandemic, it will likely continue to participate in old habits and practices of "doing" church. MCCBC needs to establish a "normalcy" that restores rhythms and relationships experienced in the past, but in a post-pandemic atmosphere of worship without compromising the church's mission of bringing reconciliation and salvation to the unchurched, unsaved, lost, disenfranchised individuals, etc. Accordingly, the confrontation of Elijah versus the state-supported prophets of Baal and Asherah at Mount Carmel applies to MCCBC.

The pericope of 1 Kings 18:16-39 will be analyzed. This text was selected because of the belief that, like the MCCBC founding members, the church today must overcome the many "Baals" in its society. Disinformation and misinformation are prevalent on social media platforms and news networks. These false prophecies, betrayals, mistrusts, and other messages have tried to devalue the church's power, removing hope for the future. The context must rely on its belief that God's sovereignty remains as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. The context must "choose this day whom [they] will serve." (Josh. 24:15). The verses in the pericope are listed below:

> 16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.17
> When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, 'Is it you troubler of Israel?' 18He
> answered, 'I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house,
> because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed the
> Baals. 19 Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with the
> four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah,
> who eat at Jezebel's table.'20 So Ahab sent to all the Israelites, and assembled the
> prophets at Mount Carmel.21 Elijah then came near to all the people, and said,
> 'How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God,
> follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' The people did not answer him a word.
> 22 Then Elijah said to the people, 'I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord; but
> Baal's prophets number four hundred fifty.23 Let two bulls be given to us; let

> them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it.[24] Then you call on the name of the Lord; the god who answers by fire is indeed God.' All the people answered, 'Well spoken!'[25] Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, 'Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many; then call on the name of your god, but put no fire to it.'[26] So they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, crying, 'O Baal, answer us!' But there was no voice, and no answer. They limped about the altar that they had made.[27] At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, 'Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has wandered away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.'[28] Then they cried aloud and, as was their custom, they cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed out over them.[29] As midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice, no answer, and no response.[30] Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come closer to me,' and all the people came closer to him. First he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down;[31] Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, 'Israel shall be your name',[32] with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. Then he made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed.[33] Next he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, 'Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.'[34] Then he said, 'Do it a second time'; and they did it a second time. Again he said, 'Do it a third time'; and they did it a third time,[35] so that the water ran all around the altar, and filled the trench also with water.[36] At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said, 'O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. [37] Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back."[38] Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench.[39] When the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, 'The Lord indeed is God; the LORD indeed is God' (1 Kings 18:16-39).

This confrontation at Mount Carmel was essential to account for the authenticities of worshipping the God of creation against all perpetrators of false religions and deities. It showed how a small, faithful remnant of prophets preserved the presence of worship to a faithful God.[1] The textual unit shows the love embrace that God reveals over and over

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[1] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 529-530.

again of His promise to His covenantal people, who are reconciled by being made righteous in His sight.[2] Jeremiah 33:14-26 says there will be a day when God will restore the Davidic Dynasty and the Levitical Priesthood to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.[3]

While the nation was experiencing its third year of drought, the Lord directed Elijah to present himself to King Ahab to tell him that He would send rain amid a severe famine in Samaria (1 Kings 18:1). This action set the stage for Elijah's confrontation with the 450 priests of Baal and the 400 priests of Asherah to see which "god" was real. Obadiah ultimately arranged a meeting between Ahab and Elijah. Ahab had initially asked Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace under Ahab, to look for food for the horses and mules to save them from the effects of the famine. However, while on his way, Obadiah found Elijah.[4]

At the meeting, Elijah told Obadiah to inform the king he would meet him. However, Obadiah was afraid and worried about being killed by Ahab because he suspected the king might think he and Elijah were working together. Elijah was seen by the king as a "fugitive from justice."[5] The king had labeled Elijah the "troubler of Israel" (1 Kings 18:17). Obadiah expresses this fear three times, mainly because of Jezebel's

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[2] Julie Baretz, *The Bible on Location: Off the Beaten Path in Ancient and Modern Israel* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 209.

[3] F. B. Huey, Jr. *Jeremiah, Lamentation, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 300-301.

[4] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 529.

[5] Mordechai Cogan, *I Kings, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, CT: The Anchor Yale Bible, 2001), 437.

actions in killing the prophets of Israel (1 Kings 18:9,12-13,14). However, Elijah assured him he would meet the king (1 Kings 18:15) to calm his fears.

As the confrontation convened, Elijah, from a sense of "fair play," allowed the prophets of Baal and Asherah to begin by choosing the sacrificial animal and contacting their god (1 Kings 18:23-29). The prophets called on their god for most of the day, even after limping around the altar, crying to their god, and cutting themselves. However, there still was no voice, no answer, and no response from the Canaanite god: no rain, no conversation, and no fire.[6]

Then Elijah called the people to come closer and repaired the altar of the Lord by gathering twelve stones for the twelve tribes of Israel, placing wood on the altar, filling four jars three times to cover the altar, and finally filling the trench with water (1 Kings 18:30-35). Then, strategically, Elijah called on the name of the Lord, who responded to the prayer by sending fire that consumed the burnt offering, the wood, and the stones and "licked up the water that was in the trench" (1 Kings 18:36-38). This demonstration proved that the God of Israel has dominion over life and death and thus convinced the people to "turn their hearts back to Him."[7]

In 1975, Andre Couch produced and sang a gospel song, "Take Me Back." The lyrics of the chorus and verses are listed below:

> Chorus: Take me back, take me back dear Lord, to the place where I first received you. Take me back, take me back dear Lord where I first believed.
> Verse 1: I feel that I'm so far from you Lord, but still I hear you calling me. Those simple things that I once knew, their memories keep drawing me.

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[6] Cogan, *1 Kings*, 441.

[7] Baretz, *The Bible on Location*, 213.

> Verse 2: I must confess, Lord I've been blessed, but yet my soul's not satisfied.
> Renew my faith, restore my joy, and dry my weeping eyes.[8]

This song provided a backdrop for the context to remember where the power comes from: the Triune God!

I sought a higher covenantal relationship and prophetic revelation with God, so I joined the FGBCFI in 2011.[9] I desired the outpouring of God's Spirit "on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28). This Spirit upon the people would allow the context to be relevant as the congregation addressed concerns of emerging secularization against church polity and rule: the church needs to balance its theologies to remain connected to historical traditions.[10]

The Fellowship is not a newly formed denomination but was formed to recognize that the movement of the Holy Spirit exists among Baptist churches. The FGBCFI was started in 1993 by Bishop Paul Morton because he believed that the traditional Baptist Church was experiencing "spiritual apartheid" in its restrictions of spiritual gifts, heavenly language, the power to cast out demons, laying on of hands, operation of the Holy Spirit, inclusion of women as ministers and pastors, etc.[11] Consequently, the Fellowship challenged the more conservative Baptist view regarding accepting spiritual gifts and the

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[8] "Take Me Back," composed by Andre Crouch (Chicago, IL: Capital CMG Publishing, 1975), https://youtu.be/AkQ2VX2I3L4?list=RDAkQ2VX2I3L4.

[9] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1295.

[10] Paul Nixon, *Healing Spiritual Amnesia: Remembering What It Means to Be the Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 8.

[11] Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, *Policy and Procedure Manual*, *Second Edition* (Atlanta, GA: Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, 2016), 11.

move of the Holy Spirit.[12] The Holy Spirit flows openly in the Fellowship's praise and worship services. Slowly but surely, this freedom has become a part of the praise and worship services at MCCBC.

Some years ago, I spent time envisioning what prompted the founding members of the context to select the name "Mount Carmel." This was especially important because there was no adequate church minutes or history before 1984. Additionally, I did not understand nor appreciate why I had experienced a high level of mistrust and skepticism from some members during my first three to four years as pastor of the church. I began assessing this problem through discussions with other local senior pastors familiar with the context. I also talked to the senior sages of the church. These talks helped me "assemble the puzzle" in my eighth year as pastor.

I discovered that the older members had deep-seated hurts and wounds that had long been covered with hardened scabs. These devastating wounds were caused by years of pastoral treachery from the pulpit, as the church experienced fidelity concerns, theft, embezzlement, lawsuits, and the lack of support and cover from the local Baptist associations. The associations covered the pastors' actions but did not show much attentiveness to the church.

Since 2002, when I began pastoring the context, I had intentionally applied consistent and appropriate ministerial ethics to allow the congregation to see the Lord's hand on me and that the "steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" and the pastor is "not down for long if he should stumble" because God has a "grip on his hand" (Ps.

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[12] Paul S. Morton, *Changing Forward: Experiencing God's Unlimited Power* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 83.

37:23-24). In my spiritual autobiography, I shared how I had experienced deep pain and suffering in my journey. As God prospered me in spiritual growth, I became a "survivor" of the deep pains and troubles I experienced with my parents, brothers, and other family members' acceptance of my differences. I was born lighter than the skin color of my parents and brothers, had freckles, reddish-brown colored hair, and an extra tiny finger on each hand. There was infidelity with women and church hurt that I experienced as a young adult. As a survivor, I was well-equipped to help the context overcome oppressive hurts and pains as I was also a person with "sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3).

Samuel Proctor's book, *The Substance of Things Hoped for: A Memoir of African-American Faith,* shared how valuable people are participants in the "substance of things hoped for" by the transforming power through Jesus, who is the object of our faith.[13] These reflections provided evidence of God's grace to me amid painful moments that helped me sort out the "spiritual dimensions" of my life from all other dimensions that were key as I provided comfort and an ultimate understanding of the hurts and pains experienced by the context.[14]

During my eighth pastoral year, the congregation confirmed that they had accepted me as their pastor-prophet and later "permitted" me to pursue my journey as a part of the FGBCFI without any measurable pushback. I believed another effort in achieving acceptance was leading the church in developing a five-year strategic plan that

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[13] Samuel D. Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped for: A Memoir of African-American Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999), 144.

[14] Richard Peace, *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), 58.

included an S.W.O.T. analysis (i.e., Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of the context. This exercise helped the church understand why it was critical to understand what makes the gathered community a significant place of worship: the MCCBC has a caring, family-generated culture. From this analysis, I developed the "Seven Cs of the Church":

1. Culture – through relationship building,
2. Compliance - accountability and responsibility,
3. Competence - intentional training,
4. Collaboration - working with non-MCCBC churches, volunteers, and community partners,
5. Content - members become the subject matter experts,
6. Capital - continue or become faithful givers, planting "first fruits" and
7. Change - be open to enlarging MCCBC's territories (1 Chron. 4:10).

This planning effort allowed the people to experience my skills in assessing the church's S.W.O.T. through training received from FGBCFI. The Holy Spirit made me realize I could not "force-feed" the Fellowship's concepts into the context as the church's fifth pastor had attempted: that pastor joined FGBCFI in 1993 and tried to change the church's culture in an "overnight" fashion, which the church rejected. With the depth of the hurt beginning to heal satisfactorily, I received "the Word of the Lord" upon me to move the congregation towards a more Spirit-directed worship atmosphere.

The ecumenical community must come to its senses and recognize that the church cannot continue in a "social club" mentality without dire consequences to its belief systems. For example, I was invited to participate in a funeral service held in another state in 2024 at a funeral home. While at the service, the gathered community of a local

church acclaimed and honored the church founder throughout the service in song, quotes, and other recognitions. The founder, who started the church in the 1930s, died in the 1970s. However, it became apparent to me and another Baptist pastor who was also in attendance that the gathered people were not honoring the deceased individual being funeralized or God. Listed below is a quote taken from the bulletin:

> We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation for all expressions of thoughtfulness, generosity, love, and concern. We are humbled by those who have traveled near and far to partake in this Celebration of Life! Above all, we express our deepest gratitude to [the founder's name was provided, but it is not being revealed in this quotation], who, by coming down, has demonstrated the greatest kindness and love of all.

Under the direction of that local church's senior pastor and staff, this quote provided the highest praise to the church's founder, not God! I thought that the church's "social club" mentality undermined God's spiritual intention for that gathered community.

This "confrontation" at the funeral was spiritual warfare. The situation reminded me of a statement from *The X-Manual*:

> Your ministry consists of cleaning out spiritual sewage infested by invisible rats and roaches. [It is] better to be an exterminator or work for a Roto-Rooter. I never went looking to be a ghostbuster. It found me. [15]

Accordingly, I recognized this situation as an opportunity of deliverance (as it found me) to "keep on" the whole armor of God and intercede with pastoral care techniques to individuals who were in attendance after the conclusion of the service. I exercised personal integrity in this situation, which was used "quietly and covertly, and

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[15] Peter J. Bellini, *The X-Manual: Exousia-A Comprehensive Handbook on Deliverance and Exorcism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022), xiii.

very openly."[16] My pastoral care was used in the face of this confrontation by simply showing up and representing the true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

Contextual-Literary Analysis

Events Leading up to the Confrontation at Mount Carmel

The text in 1 Kings 1-2:10 shares the story of Solomon's rise to power.[17] In 1 Kings 3:9, Solomon asked God for "an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil . . ." which points to a great start in his reign of the Kingdom of Israel. But soon after Solomon finished building the temple (1 Kings 5-8), he began to make bad choices by marrying the daughters of kings in surrounding nations for alliance purposes. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3), including Pharoah's daughter and women of Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite origins. These women turned away Solomon's heart from the God of his fathers to the "other gods" (1 Kings 11:4). God commanded the Israelites, ". . .You shall not enter into marriage with them . . . for they will surely incline your heart to follow their gods" (1 Kings 11:2).

Solomon, meanwhile, accumulated wealth and armies and instituted slave labor for his various building projects. In 1 Kings 11:6, Solomon is described as having ". . . done what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not completely follow the Lord, as his father David had done." Following his leadership, the children of Israel began to

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[16] Stephen B. Roberts, ed, *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care: A Practical Clergy and Chaplain's Handbook* (Nashville, TN: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2016), 14.

[17] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 495-518.

adapt and accept the worship of the various gods and introduced them into Israel's worship. Solomon's downfall is chronicled in 1 Kings 9-11.

Rehoboam, Solomon's son, succeeded him as king of Israel (1 Kings 12:1). He followed in his dad's footsteps in his quest for wealth and lust for power. Rehoboam had established a pattern similar to Pharoah's in the Exodus story, as he increased taxes on slave labor.[18] The people rebelled and eventually sought the leadership of Jeroboam, whom the people of Israel looked upon as a "second Moses who had returned from Egypt to liberate the people who were suffering under forced labor."[19] As a result, ten of the original tribes of Israel departed from the "house of David" and formed the northern kingdom called Israel. In contrast, the remaining two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, became known as the Southern Kingdom or Judah. Israel's capital was Samaria, while Judah's was in Jerusalem.

Jeroboam built two new temples to compete with Solomon's temple in Jerusalem: one in Bethel and the other in Dan (1 Kings 12:28-33). Each temple had a golden calf. Jeroboam committed further religious transgressions by having other houses in high places, illegitimate priests who were not Levites under Mosaic Laws, and creating a different festival calendar.[20] The people of Israel went up to these altars and offered sacrifices to the local gods. These criteria, being established by Jeroboam, "became a sin" (1 Kings 12:30).

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[18] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 519.

[19] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 518.

[20] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 520.

The requirements for the kings of Israel were to worship the God of Israel alone, get rid of idolatry in Israel, remain faithful to the covenant (like David), and go against corruption and injustice.[21] Based on close readings of the Book of Kings, all of the kings of Israel, after the death of Solomon, "did evil in the ways of Jeroboam." This observation is supported by an article entitled "The Cultic Reformation Chiastic Structure in the Book of Kings."[22] The article also reported only eight of the twenty kings of Judah did "what was right in the eyes of the Lord." The evils of these kings bring about God's focus on the role of His prophets as prophetic witnesses in proclaiming His will: these kings were helpless without the assistance of God's prophets.[23] The kings' royal capacity was inadequate; therefore, prophetic intervention was required to alter the circumstances of the kings.[24]

God's prophets spoke on behalf of God to His people.[25] The prophets played the role of covenant watchdogs similar to the role of Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31-37) as he proclaims on behalf of the Lord a renewed covenantal relationship whereby "the law would be in the people's hearts so instinctual that teaching would become unnecessary."[26] These prophets were challenged to consistently remind Israel of their calling to be a light to the

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[21] Yitzhak Lee-Sak, "The Cultic Reformation Chiastic Structure in the Book of Kings," *Religions* 14, no. 432 (2023): 11.

[22] Lee-Sak, "The Cultic Reformation Chiastic Structure in the Book of Kings," 11.

[23] Walter Brueggemann and Davis Hankins, "The Affirmation of Prophetic Power and Deconstruction of Royal Authority in the Elisha Narratives," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (*CBQ*) 76, no. 1 (2014): 59.

[24] Brueggemann and Hankins, "The Affirmation of Prophetic Power and Deconstruction of Royal Authority in the Elisha Narratives," 61.

[25] Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, Second Edition* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 254.

[26] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1124.

nations, call out evil acts like idolatry, address social injustices, and repent of sins as they obey the laws of the Torah. As Deuteronomic history unfolds, it clearly shows that God raised prophets to hold the kings accountable to the Torah [and] at each intersection they engaged the Israeli kings.[27]

Social-Political Background

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings are classified as Historical Books. These books cover the period from the ninth to the sixth centuries BCE.[28] The analysis of the pericope is contained in the seventh century BCE. The Children of Israel lived in the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which dominated the Near East. Israel was more exposed to foreign penetration than Judah due to its location. Israel's neighbors included the Phoenicians, Babylonians, and Assyrians.[29] Judah was surrounded by Moab, Edom, Arabia, and Egypt; however, Egypt was more of an ally than a menace to Israel during this period.[30]

Mount Carmel is a twenty-four-mile mountain ridge with two sections: the upper mountain ridge rises to an altitude of 1,791 feet, and the northwestern end of the mountain overlooks the Mediterranean Sea. The southeastern point of the mountain ridge looks over the Jezreel Valley. Other features of Mount Carmel include that the land was

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[27] Brueggemann and Hankins, "The Affirmation of Prophetic Power and Deconstruction of Royal Authority in the Elisha Narratives," 59.

[28] BCE is defined as "Before the Common Era," meaning the years before the birth of Jesus Christ.

[29] Simon J. De Vries, *1 Kings*. *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 12, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Harper Collins Christian Publishing, 2015), xxv.

[30] De Vries, *1 Kings*, xxv.

unreceptive to many crops and was mainly unsettled in biblical times.[31] However, the land was receptive to certain crops such as olives, grains, fruits, honey, and balsam.

Further south of Mount Carmel is where the Israelites crossed into the Promised Land with the following instructions, paraphrased by Baretz, from Deuteronomy 11:8-17:

> The land you are about to enter is flowing with milk and honey, but it is watered with rain from the heavens. If you are faithful to God, the land will provide everything you need. If you stray from the path, the skies will dry up, and there will be no rain.[32]

The scripture addresses Israel's need to remember their "lessons and warnings and teach them to future generations so that the Lord's promises of blessings might find fulfillment in all the years to come."[33]

The Israelites' primary northern neighbors consisted of the Phoenicians, whose land contained mountainous terrain unsuitable for growing many crops. However, this limitation was somewhat offset by their natural seaports, excellent shipbuilders, ready supply of seamen, and accessibility to international markets around the Mediterranean area.[34] As a result, these two economies complement each other. Consequently, the kings of ancient Israel "always sought alliances with their Phoenician neighbors to ensure prosperity and cement its imperial power."[35]

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[31] Baretz, *The Bible on Location*, 206.

[32] Baretz, *The Bible on Location*, 207.

[33] Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy. The New American Commentary, Volume 4* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishing, 1994), 209-210.

[34] Baretz, *The Bible on Location*, 208.

[35] Brian Peckham, *Phoenicia: Episodes and Anecdotes from the Ancient Mediterranean* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 291.

The kings during these periods were considered rulers with two bodies: a natural body that lives and dies and a symbolic body that endures and is assumed by the ruler's successor.[36] One of the classic arguments is "the king is immortal because legally he can never die, or that he is legally never under age" and that the king is "incapable of doing wrong . . . [or] thinking wrong"; however, Kantorowicz cited that these thoughts of the kings are "man-made irreality."[37] Kantorowicz further states, ". . . indeed, that strange construction of a human mind (that a king has two bodies), which finally becomes slave to its own fictions."[38]

Hebrew Bible scholars distinguish the relationship between the king and the God of Israel.[39] One of the classic arguments raised is while the king is "the instantiation [representation] and authority for exercising the sovereign and fully actual power of God," the view differs from the "sovereignty of God over the human king by subordinating the latter to the requirements of God's Torah."[40] When there is a pronounced distance between the king's actions and the divine plans, the "prophets paradigmatically arise to assert God and God's Torah as a rival sovereign power over and against royal claims to power."[41]

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[36] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), ix.

[37] Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 5.

[38] Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 5.

[39] Erwin R. Goodenough, "Kingship in Early Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* (*JBL*) 48, no. 3/4 (1929): 169-170.

[40] Brueggemann and Hankins, "The Affirmation of Prophetic Power and Deconstruction of Royal Authority in the Elisha Narratives," 58.

[41] Brueggemann and Hankins, "The Affirmation of Prophetic Power and Deconstruction of Royal Authority in the Elisha Narratives," 58-59.

Deuteronomistic History

Jewish tradition regards the prophet Jeremiah as the author of the Book of Kings due to the stylistic similarities between the Book of Kings and the Book of Jeremiah.[42] However, the Book of Kings is part of the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH). DtrH is identified by the narrative writings covering the actions of the "Former Prophets" in the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings.[43] These books were not originally written as a commissioned religious work but as a "historical narrative."[44]

In Old Testament and Hebrew Bible studies, theologians and biblical scholars have debated the legitimacy of identifying particular writings to a specific author.[45] Hillel Millgram cited that many scholars have been "less than eager to offer absolute identification of authors" for authorship of a particular book.[46] He purported that most scholars would instead use "more elastic and malleable authors" such as the "Yahwist," the "Elohist," the "Priestly author," or (for the Former Prophets) the "Deuteronomistic Historian."[47] Millgram noted, ". . . from examining intertextual clues, character motives, and historical opportunity in general, he offers several participants as authors of the Deuteronomistic History." Millgram mentioned that Abiathar (1 Kings 4:4) and his sons, Jonathan (2 Sam. 15:27) and Ahimelech (2 Sam. 8:17), who were priests, Jeremiah the

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[42] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 493.

[43] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 493.

[44] Hillel I. Millgram, *The Elijah Enigma: The Prophet, King Ahab, and the Rebirth of Monotheism in Book of Kings* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2014), 2.

[45] Brain N. Peterson, *The Authors of the Deuteronomistic History: Locating a Tradition of Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 2.

[46] Peterson, *The Authors of the Deuteronomistic History*, 2.

[47] Peterson, *The Authors of the Deuteronomistic History*, 2.

prophet, and Baruch the servant and scribe of Jeremiah (Jer. 36:1-6), all played a role in formulating the DtrH.[48]

Millgram used a synchronic approach to closely reading biblical texts, ultimately allowing him to focus on a theological objective. He states that Martin Noth (1902-1968), a German scholar of the Hebrew Bible, is credited with a seminal introduction to the DtrH and set the bar for later scholars when discussing it.[49]

The Book of Kings attempts to analyze the root causes of the disaster that had overtaken the Children of Israel despite a distortion of the complex secular data of the times that may have been omitted from a more modern point of view.[50] However, the DtrH, including the Book of Kings, falls under the category of historical narrative because it attempts to describe actual events and people in telling its story, as the book tells the story of the successive reigns of the Israeli kings.[51]

According to DtrH writings, the children of Israel were initially led by judges, not kings. However, the people asked Samuel at Ramah to appoint kings so they could be governed like "all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:4-6, 9). The prophet Samuel opposed monarchy because he felt it would grant rule to a human king, which would diminish and marginalize "God's sovereignty over His people Israel."[52]

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[48] Peterson, *The Authors of the Deuteronomistic History*, 3.

[49] Peterson, *The Authors of the Deuteronomistic History,* 13.

[50] Millgram, *The Elijah Enigma*, 2.

[51] Millgram, *The Elijah Enigma*, 9.

[52] Millgram, *The Elijah Enigma*, 28.

Key Characters within the Pericope

The primary characters in the pericope include but are not limited to Elijah, King Ahab, Queen Jezebel, and the local gods Baal and Asherah, as well as Obadiah, are summarized below:

Elijah was a pivotal figure in the development of monotheistic religion.[53] He chose to live an ascetic life, living like a hermit in caves, which Mount Carmel had many.[54] Elijah is described in 2 Kings 1:8 as "a hairy man with a belt of leather around his waist."[55] He was from the town called Tishbe, located in the land of Gilead (1 Kings 17:1). Elijah did not hang around the shrine or a king's court nor have a house or a home to reside in regularly.[56]

There was a mysteriousness to Elijah's character. Elijah is the same one who showed up at the Mountain of Transfiguration, where God and humanity encountered each other at the mountain of glory.[57] Beratz stated that Elijah was an "itinerant man of God, roaming about Israel and suddenly appearing from nowhere."[58] The little background on Elijah, coupled with the miracles and his "theatrical departure from the earth in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:1-12), have given rise to interesting conjecture about Elijah's identity. Some of the speculations are listed below:

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[53] Millgram, *The Elijah Enigma*, 5.

[54] Baretz, *The Bible on Location,* 205.

[55] The ESV says he wore a "garment of hair," while the NIV shares the same words but it included a note stating that Elijah was a "hairy man."

[56] Baretz, *The Bible on Location*, 212.

[57] James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark.* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 262.

[58] Beratz, *The Bible on Location*, 212.

- According to Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer (EL.xlvii; Targum Yesushalmi on Num. 25:12), Elijah was a direct descendent of Pinhas, the religious zealous grandson of Aaron, which would mean Elijah was a priest as well as a prophet.
- According to the Kabbala (Yalkut Reubeni, Bereshit 9a), Elijah was not mortal but rather an angel in human form, which explains why he had no record of having parents or children.
- Hebrew legend equates Elijah with Sandalphon, one of the cherubs of the ark, who gathers the prayers of the faithful and sends them to God.[59]

Millgram argued that Elijah was a "fundamentally flawed human being, in that one side of his ascetic living blinded him from having human empathy."[60] Millgram stated that Elijah demonstrated his respect to the royalty after the confrontation at Mount Carmel and after the heavy rain by running ahead of Ahab's chariot to Jezreel (1 Kings 18:46).[61] Elijah was instrumental in helping to usher in the shift of the children of Israel from pagan worship to worship of the Lord.

The story of Ahab is found in 1 Kings 16:1 through 1 Kings 22:53. He was the son of Omri and succeeded him as king over Israel for twenty-two years (873-852 BCE).[62] As was his father before him, Ahab was an evil king "in the sight of the Lord" because he followed the ways of Jeroboam, who caused Israel to sin by worshipping Baal (1 Kings 22:52-53). He is noted as the first of the kings of Israel to be mentioned as a king of Israel beginning in 1 Kings 20:2.[63]

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[59] Beratz, *The Bible on Location*, 212.

[60] Millgram, *The Elijah Enigma*, 6.

[61] Adiel Kadari, "Did Elijah Show Respect to Royalty?" *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 46, no. 3 (2015): 404-406.

[62] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 527.

[63] Mordechai Cogan, *I Kings, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, CT: The Anchor Yale Bible, 2001), 420.

Ahab's apostasy follows Solomon's example (1 Kings 11:1-11), as both monarchs were led astray by the Lord's command not to serve other gods (Exod. 20:4-6) by their foreign wives.[64] Both Ahab and Solomon monarchies honored the worshipping of their wife's native gods.[65]

Jezebel was a Phoenician princess who became the queen of Israel through her marriage to Ahab (1 Kings 16:31). She was the daughter of King Ethbaal of Sidon. As a foreigner, Jezebel was not the typical woman to marry an Israeli king. However, her name, "Where is the prince?", is connected to the ". . . cry of Baal's divine and human subjects when he is in the underworld."[66] Jezebel's name and royal lineage would suggest that she was destined to marry into a royal family. This mixed marriage was performed more as a strategic alliance with ties between groups of differing thoughts and beliefs.

Jezebel's marriage presented complexities, such as cultural affiliations, social status, and gender risk within the imperial setting of the relationship of subalterns (i.e., lower-class status).[67] Kristin Joachimsen referenced how subalterns position themselves regarding the empire and the interconnectedness within the imperial setting.[68] For example, living under the imperial power of Israel may have caused male subalterns to

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[64] Cogan, *1 Kings*, 422.

[65] Cogan, *1 Kings*, 421.

[66] Bruce M. Metzger et al., *The Oxford Guide to People and Places of the Bible* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 150.

[67] Kristin Joachimsen, "Jezebel as Voiced by Others in 1 and 2 Kings," *Die Welt Des Orients* 50, no. 2 (2020): 220.

[68] Joachimsen, "Jezebel as Voiced by Others in 1 and 2 Kings," 220.

have thoughts and concerns of the fear of loss of their identity as a result of having a foreign and Phoenician-Israeli queen.[69] These complexities created disruptions in Israel.[70]

Jezebel's marriage to Ahab reflected the customs of antiquity, as marriages were often done to seal the alliances between nations.[71] However, this marriage also allowed the dominant worshipping influences of Jezebel, who worshiped Baal and Asherah. This disruptiveness to the worship of the Lord is expressed in 1 Kings 16:32, which states how Ahab erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, built in Samaria, the capital of Israel. The kings before Ahab had mainly breached their faith in the Lord by imposing idolatrous forms of worship upon the faithful with sculptural images, thereby turning their backs on the God of Israel and eventually turning to the exclusive worship of a pagan god.[72] The mixed marriage of Ahab to Jezebel opened the floodgates to the worship of Baal, who was recognized "as a storm god, associated with thunder and lightning."[73] Jezebel is a symbol of how foreign rule threatened the identity of Israel and the ideology of worship.[74]

During antiquity, many regions used one or more symbols to denote their local gods and deities.[75] Tilde Binger stated it is "not the trees, rivers, or streams that primitive people worshipped, but rather the spirits or gods that live in the things that are the

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[69] Joachimsen, "Jezebel as Voiced by Others in 1 and 2 Kings," 225.

[70] Joachimsen, "Jezebel as Voiced by Others in 1 and 2 Kings," 220-221.

[71] Baretz, *The Bible on Location*, 208.

[72] Millgram, *The Elijah Enigma*, 42-43.

[73] Coogan et al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 530.

[74] Joachimsen, "Jezebel as Voiced by Others in 1 and 2 Kings," 224.

[75] Tilde Binger, *Asherah: Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel, and the Old Testament* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 109.

recipients of the offerings and prayers."[76] The pagan deities had "intellectual life dominated by mythology, stories of the gods" based on their biographies, genealogies, struggles, quarrels, and affairs.[77] The focus of the pagan world was the realm of the gods. The book, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, cited that "Yahweh has neither biography nor genealogy" and therefore, there "was nothing to tell about Him except His creative acts and His dealing with humanity as a personal God."[78]

From the burning bush story, the revelation of God's name was given to Moses (Ex 3:13-15). Moses requested explicit knowledge of who was giving him the authority to tell Pharaoh to free Israel. God told Moses to tell all who needed to know that the "I am who I am" had sent him. As such, the living God of Israel is not "a god" of a larger class of other divinities: the Elohim of Israel (Yahweh) is the divine name of the One and only true God who is distinguished from the pagan gods.[79]

The God, upon whom Abraham and his descendants characterized, is a *numen personale* (personal god) rather than a *numen locale* (local god).[80] Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, who became known as Pope Benedict XVI, shared the following comments:

> The God of Abraham and his descendants was not the god of a place but the god of men. . . . He is, therefore, not bound to one spot but is present and powerful wherever man is. God's transcendence prompted the Israelites to conceive this relationship with Him in a manner different from their contemporaries: they met God personally 'on the plane of I and You, not on the plane of the spatial'

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[76] Binger, *Asherah*, 109.

[77] Michael Coogan and Mark S. Smith, *Stories from Ancient Canaan, Second Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 20.

[78] Coogan and Smith, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 20.

[79] Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority, Volume 2: God Who Speaks and Shows* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 185.

[80] Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity, Second Edition Communio Books* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2004), 84.

> because He is not subject to limits of time and space and has initiated a personal relationship with them.[81]

Yahweh insists on distinguishing Himself from the abilities ascribed to the other false divinities (Exod. 20:4-6). Baal was the "resident" god at Mount Carmel during biblical times, so Elijah chose the location to prove the supremacy of the Israelite God.[82] Charles Francis Pfeiffer (1863-1927 AD), author and theologian, once noted the following narrative:

> If Baal is the 'rider of the clouds' in Ugarit (an ancient port city in northern Syria), then Yahweh rides the clouds as stated in Psalm 68:4; if Baal is a fertility god, then the Israelites must know that Yahweh causes fertility; if Shemesh ('sun' in Hebrew') brings light to the world in Canaanite thought, the Hebrews insist that Yahweh enlightens the world.[83]

Therefore, Yahweh is the God of faith and promise.

Millgram shared that every spring season, Baal was killed by Mot, the god of the desert and the underworld: Mot's name means death.[84] Michael Coogan and Mark Smith provided the following overview regarding Baal:

> Unlike climates with four seasons, the Canaan-Syria area had a Mediterranean climate consisting of two seasons: cold, rainy, and hot, dry. The ancient Canaanites knew that this phenomenon was due to the death of Baal. However, according to the myth, Baal did not remain dead. His sister, Anat, the warrior goddess, intervenes to stymie Mot's design. She attacks Mot, cuts his body into small pieces, and sows the earth with the pieces; this act causes Baal to revive in the fall season. He now brings the rains and fertility returns to the world.[85]

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[81] David G. Bonagura, "Logos to Son in the Christology of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI," *New Blackfriars* 93, no. 1046 (July 2012): 478.

[82] Baretz, *The Bible on Location*, 206.

[83] Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 185.

[84] Millgram, *The Elijah Enigma*, 43.

[85] Coogan and Smith, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 101-115.

Therefore, Baal was a dying and reviving god. Asherah was a goddess whose work closely connected to Yahweh and functioned as His consort.[86] Binger referenced the poem of Keret, where Asherah played a short but prominent role when Baal and Anat approached Asherah to address El since Baal had no palace and needed El's approval.[87]

Obadiah, whose name means "servant of the Lord," was a faithful worshipper of the God of Israel.[88] He had a brief but significant role in Elijah's encounter with Ahab's prophets. In 1 Kings 18:3, Obadiah is introduced as Ahab's chamberlain (the person in charge of the palace) who prepares the way for Elijah and Ahab's meeting. Obadiah also provided food and protection for one hundred of the Lord's prophets whom Jezebel was trying to kill (1 Kings 18:4). According to Jewish traditions, he is also the prophet whose vision is presented in the Book of Obadiah.[89]

Synthesis of 1 Kings 18:16-39

The narrative within the pericope conveys several messages about King Ahab's household, including his marriage to a foreign woman, worship of Yahweh and other gods, power struggles, land disputes, jealousy, and murder.[90] The most salient lesson I learned from the confrontation on Mount Carmel is that God is as relevant today in the Columbus context as He was thousands of years ago. The Lord "is the same yesterday

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[86] Binger, *Asherah*, 110.

[87] Binger, *Asherah*, 63-64.

[88] Daniel I. Block, *Obadiah, Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 21.

[89] Block. *Obadiah,* 20-21.

[90] Joachimsen, "Jezebel as Voiced by Others in 1 and 2 Kings," 229.

and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Today, the church needs to be "quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19) as they hear God's instructions and are led by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 30:21, John 14:26, Rom. 8:26, Rom. 12:2). Historically, this local, predominantly Black Baptist church operated with a traditional flow of worship.

A second important lesson learned from this confrontation at Mount Carmel is the need for the context to worship God in "spirit and in truth." The context needs to pivot and stop worrying so much about mirroring churches that have compromised their standards of true worship to fill the building with people. The context must first boast of the Lord and all of His benefits. Matthew's gospel says, "strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33).

The context is full of loving and talented people, but the concern is the congregants' faithfulness in true worship. If the believers are not present in worship, including in their giving of time, talents, gifts, etc., then the church may be missing the fullness of God's blessings. The congregation must see the tiers of leadership as true and chief worshippers first! The congregation must see them give honor to God. The "chief worshipers" must set the tone of worship, which sets the atmosphere in the context.

Conclusion

I began this paper by briefly describing how I addressed the deep-seated hurt of the context experienced by previous pastors. It took me several years to gain the congregation's trust. I then shared the current situation, understanding how the church was named "Mount Carmel." In 1925, the church seemed challenged to decide whom they would serve: God or mammon.

The contextual literary analysis examines the context and the structure that the children of Israel faced at the confrontation on Mount Carmel. The pericope consisted of 1 Kings 18:16-39. The main lesson of this encounter on the Mount Carmel mountain range was to bring the people of God back to where they first received the Lord: in their hearts, in their living, and as role models for the nations (community). The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob/Israel is not a god who lives in the things that are the recipients of offerings and prayers. The God of Abraham and his descendants is a person-centered God who does not reside in one spot like the local deities that foreign nations serve. God's power is limitless, powerful, and everywhere a believer goes.

I then laid out the events leading up to the confrontation at Mount Carmel. The Book of Kings starts with Chapters One and Two with the story of the passing of the leadership of the kingdom from David to Solomon. Chapters Three-Four shared how Solomon, who was in the period of being a "good king," asked God for wisdom in leading the people of God. Chapters Five-Eight tell of Solomon's activity in building the temple for God. David wanted to build the temple, but God told him he had "too much blood on his hands."

Chapters Nine through Eleven describe how Solomon became a "bad king" after the completion of the construction of the temple. He made terrible choices by marrying foreign women to establish alliances with neighboring nations. This led Solomon and subsequent kings of Israel to adapt to their wives' pagan worship and establish pagan worship in Israel. This caused the hearts of the kings of Israel to turn from the God of Israel. Chapters Twelve through Sixteen share how Israel became two nations – Israel and Judah – due to a schism created from profound socio-economic differences and

resentments of non-Judah Hebrews who were placed in forced labor and heavy taxation to mainly benefit the king's lust for luxury and glory.[91] As Chapter Sixteen ends, it tells how "Ahab did more to provoke the anger of the Lord . . . than had all the kings in Israel who were before him" (1 Kings 16:33). Chapter Seventeen introduces Elijah and tells of the impending drought upon the nation.

Parallelism exists between the challenge at Mount Carmel and the challenges of the context with superficial worship and the "Baals" it faces today. Elijah's confrontation with the state-supported prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel is a significant narrative component. The context needs authentic worship that honors the one true God. The context calls for a transformative shift from traditional worship to a more charismatic one. If the church's leadership and laity are trained and educated on church renewal and revitalization, the church would be more equipped to recognize the move of the Holy Spirit. Church renewal is the hope of revitalizing the church when God's people fall into a state of unfaithfulness.[92]

Having laid out a biblical foundational text that addresses this hypothesis and problem statement, I will now transition to a historical motif that connects to the overall foundational work in the Historical Foundations chapter that follows.

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[91] De Vries, *1 Kings*, xxiii.

[92] Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 42**.**

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Spiritual Transformative Awakening of Leaders and Laity

The primary historical person related to this doctoral project is Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875 AD), who is considered to be one of the most influential revivalists of the nineteenth century and a vital leader of the Second Great Awakening.[1] This analysis will examine the crucial aspects of the First and Second Great Awakenings. Additionally, there will be an exploration of other personalities and unique movements of the Spirit of God that were vital in formulating the hypothesis for the Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church (MCCBC). This doctoral project is designed to transform the context from a traditional worship format to a more charismatic, spirit-led worship environment. These individuals and movements were also instrumental in transforming the senior pastor of the context.

Finney's journey to ministry was considered unusual as he rose swiftly from a novice to a central leader in the Presbyterian church.[2] He worked secularly as a small-town attorney in upstate New York. However, in 1821, he experienced a profound conversion in his law office, which he described as "a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit"

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[1] Frances FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 37.

[2] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 38.

when it descended on him "in waves and waves of liquid love."[3] Finney's ministry training was with his pastor. He was ordained a Presbyterian minister in two and a half years, contrary to traditional denominational practices, which required ministers to be trained in Britain or at a bible college. Although he could have been assigned work at a local church, he elected to start his ministry as an itinerate preacher, traveling "the backwoods of the north country on horseback" and preaching for a female missionary society."[4]

Finney was described as tall with a "clear voice and blazing eyes," preaching "directly and dramatically . . . from extemporaneously or bare outlines."[5] Although a Presbyterian, he learned most of his ministerial techniques from the Methodists and his secular occupation. Finney structured his arguments and anticipated objections in his sermons. Instead of using "literary allusion," as most Presbyterian ministers did, he illustrated his point with examples from the "common affairs of men."[6]

Before 1830, Finney focused on the need for conversion but later broadened his messages to include the responsibilities of believers. He stressed that new coverts "did not escape life, but rather, they had a duty to begin new lives dedicated to giving up self-love in favor of loving others."[7] The historian Stephen Post called this type of sacrifice

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[3] Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism, Second Edition* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 28.

[4] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 38.

[5] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 38-39.

[6] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 38.

[7] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 38-39.

the "disinterested benevolence" of true Christians as they work to attain God's kingdom on earth.[8]

Finney preached about "the ability of men and women to choose their salvation, to work for the general welfare, and to build a new society."[9] As such, he was labeled a "nineteenth-century man," meaning that he was entirely in tune with the spirit of the Jacksonian democracy that referred to the idea of "its expansiveness of individualism, faith in progress, and its egalitarianism."[10] The word "egalitarian" expresses a society espousing social equality. However, the word does infer "that everyone is not treated exactly alike, but rather that [when] everyone is accorded full status as a human being to produce culture . . . there can be different roles and rewards in such societies, but no one is excluded because of birth."[11]

Finney was instrumental in the change in social structure and spiritual life during the Rochester Revival, which ran from 1830 to 1831 in the upper state of New York. He did not start the revival, but he joined it in September 1830 after it had been ongoing for four weeks, and he was instrumental in the "outpouring of the spirit upon the people."[12] He preached for six months at a Presbyterian church almost every night and three times on Sunday. People of all denominations came to hear the Word. By the Spring of 1831,

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[8] Stephen Post, "Disinterested Benevolence: An American Debate Over the Nature of Christian Love," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 14, no. 2 (1986): 356.

[9] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 40.

[10] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 40.

[11] T. R. Young and Bruce Arrigo, *The Dictionary of Critical Social Sciences (*New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 97.

[12] William G. McLoughlin, Jr., *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 42.

there were hundreds of converts, and sympathetic revivals were breaking out across New York and New England.[13]

Finney's revival style introduced emotional prayer groups, ministers who prayed aloud as others joined in, and often, individuals attending the service would "break out into tears and confess their sins and blessed the Lord." Those individuals seeking a closer walk with God were seated on the "anxious bench" in front of the church, where the congregation could see them when they felt the spirit of the Lord.[14] This interaction created a new sense of trust among the congregants; family ties were strengthened; enemies asked one another for forgiveness, and strangers found a sense of community.[15]

The revivals led to the rise of voluntary associations aimed at discouraging vice, caring for the poor, and helping women raise their children. Finney also involved women in prayer ministry, which promoted a form of "spiritual equality" between men and women. However, women still lacked legal rights in marriage. Nonetheless, Finney's actions effectively granted women the same moral authority as men.[16] Notably, some historians like Curtis Johnson and Charles Hambrick-Stowe pointed out that although Finney spoke out against the national sin of slavery, he opposed efforts to "eradicate that sin in favor of the greater goal of evangelism."[17] Despite this, his influence on the Second Great Awakening remains widely acknowledged.

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[13] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 41-42.

[14] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 42.

[15] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 42.

[16] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 43.

[17] Curtis D. Johnson and Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, "Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism," *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 3 (1997): 1059.

Finney provided a proven revivalistic format that transformed people from former traditional worship to a more charismatic, spirit-led worship environment. I believe that an introduction to the meaning and usefulness of renewal and revitalization themes will better serve MCCBC in its commitment and obedience to following the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). The context has an established fellowship and relationship with God; however, the congregants must be seated on the "anxious bench" to be thoroughly drenched "in waves and waves of liquid love."

The Evangelical Revival and the Great Awakenings

The origins of American evangelism as a distinct form of Protestantism lie in the revivals that swept back and forth across the English-speaking world, mainly from England, Scotland, and Germany, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[18] Although there were many revivals in America during these centuries, the First Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening were two significant events experiencing the "outpouring of the Holy Spirit." The historian William McLoughlin noted the following comments regarding these awakenings:

> The religious feelings combined with symbols [elements embraced in a democracy] have meaning in motivating and inspiring reverence, devotion, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice. These symbols give unity and direction to culture; they provide national identity and ideas. These beliefs and values are not intellectual, but they are the sources of common understanding about behavior, public and private.[19]

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[18] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 17.

[19] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 102.

The historian Donald Mathews shared that "church life could not be sustained psychologically in a constant state of excitation; the institutional framework is necessary to maintain the everyday life of a Christian community."[20] He further stated that the "sporadic renewal, although an interesting phenomenon, might be a ritualistic dramatization of religious life necessary to sustain the clergy's hopes and relieve the anxieties of the laity."[21]

McLoughlin argued that revitalizations sometimes begin and even run their course as "religious movements, and accordingly, they often go unnoticed by historians who have their eyes trained chiefly on economic or political indicators, tariff debates, or diplomatic treaties."[22] For example, McLoughlin cited numerous polls of historians and various news reporters in preparation for the American Bicentennial. These groups were asked to list and describe the top 100 events over the bicentennial period, but none listed either awakenings in their top selections. Yet, the colonial life on the part of specialists turned up evidence that the Great Awakenings were perhaps the most extensive intercolonial event, that it reached into virtually every kind of community and crossroads, that its efforts were at first profoundly unsettling to the established order and then became creative elements in the establishment of a new order in society; and that indirect lines connect many of his impulses to those of the War of Independence and nation-building endeavors.[23]

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[20] Donald G. Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1969): 25.

[21] Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process," 25.

[22] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, vii-viii.

[23] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, viii.

McLoughlin further cited historians Peter Miller and Alan Heimett, who argued with considerable effect that the awakenings began new eras, not merely of American Protestantism, but in the "evolution of the American mind, that it was a watershed, a break with the Middle Ages, a turning point, a crisis."[24] McLoughlin stated that revivals alter the lives of individuals, while awakenings alter the worldview of people and culture. Below are McLoughlin's definitions of "revivalism" and "awakenings."

> Revivalism is the Protestant ritual in which charismatic evangelists convey the Word of God to large masses of people who, under this influence, experience what Protestants call conversion, salvation, regeneration, or spiritual rebirth.
>
> Awakenings (the most vital yet mysterious of all folk art) are periods of cultural revitalization that begin in a general crisis of beliefs and values and extend over a generation or so. During this time, a profound reorientation in beliefs and values takes place.[25]

Historian Earle Carns defined revival as follows:

> Revival means to wake up and live. The basic idea of renewal is the returning of something to its true nature and purpose. It is a special movement of the Spirit of God in which He renews the hearts of believers. The works of the Holy Spirit in restoring the people of God to a more vital spiritual life, witness, and work by prayer and the Word after repentance in crisis for their spiritual decline. First, revival comes from God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Second, revival primarily affects believers, those who have already experienced spiritual life. Third, revival presupposes declension [condition of decline or moral deterioration]. Fourth, prayer and the Scriptures are central to bringing change, specifically renewed spiritual life and witness.[26]

Revivals and awakenings occur in all cultures; they are essentially "folk movements" that describe how a group of people or a nation reshapes its identity, transforms its patterns of

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[24] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, xiii.

[25] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, xiii.

[26] A. Scott Moreau, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 830-831.

thoughts and actions, and sustains a healthy relationship with environmental and social change.[27]

America's religious landscape in the eighteenth century included various religious faiths and practices that were dominated by Calvinist Congregationalist churches and other denominations such as Quakers, Dutch Reformed, Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist, and Baptist churches. Mission outreach to Indian tribes was "half-hearted and at best disappointing," while enslaved populations resisted pressures of "Christianize as human chattel" by their shareholders.[28] During this period, historian John Smith stated that Enlightenment Rationalism influenced the educated class growing in America, such as atheism, deism, Unitarianism, and Universalism.[29]

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758 AD), a New York Presbyterian minister, was instrumental in the First Great Awakening.[30] He preached in a "plain style" of sermonizing – reemphasizing traditional Puritan Calvinist doctrines. He and other ministers recognized the cultural crisis involving the convergence of political, social, and economic forces influenced by a broad theological interpretation of doctrinal standards. This spirit altered the dynamics between those in power and those subject to it.[31]

The First Great Awakening peaked in the 1740s but set off continued spiritual renewal reverberations until the beginning of the American Revolutionary War. The

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[27] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, xiii.

[28] John Howard Smith, *First Great Awakening: Redefining Religion in British America, 1725-1775* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015), 2.

[29] Smith, *First Great Awakening*, 2.

[30] Tim Dowley et al., ed, *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, *Third Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), 416.

[31] Smith, *First Great Awakening*, 5.

Calvinistic society of America considered humankind to be "utterly depraved" and, therefore, had a "constant struggle with Satan."[32] In the view of the church, God had "reason to condemn all [humankind] to hell, but because of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross, He had arbitrarily decided to save an elect few saints through piety [total devotion and commitment] and soul-searching. The thought was that humankind would have the "hope" to receive an infusion of God's grace.[33]

The historian Frances FitzGerald indicated that "church and state" were not separate entities but cooperated to build a holy commonwealth.[34] Due to this mutual agreement, the activities of the mainline churches were subsidized by taxpayers in all the colonies except Rhode Island, where Baptist churches mostly settled.[35] In the pre-1800s, the church and state cooperation experienced clergy members, the elite, and property owners regulating the affairs of the country's community in the same way that Puritan fathers regulated the affairs of their households; Puritans and many Christians saw themselves as only responsible to God.[36]

The Second Great Awakening began after the end of the War of Independence and continued intermittently in various parts of the country until the 1850s.[37] By the end of the eighteenth century, Americans rebelled against the formal structure and teachings

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[32] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 18.

[33] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 18.

[34] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 18.

[35] Edwin S. Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1957), 14-15.

[36] Gaustad, *The Great Awakening in New England*, 19.

[37] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 17.

of the more established churches and efforts to recover their "authentic spiritual experiences" based on a "religion of the heart, as opposed to the head."[38] These revivals introduced the conversation that there can be a "sudden, overwhelming experience of God's grace."[39]

The established churches incorporated strong pietistic traditions emphasizing a personal relationship with God and devotion to life. However, American "revivals were transforming Protestantism," including new ideas such as the separation of church and state.[40] Mainline, established churches that migrated from overseas had well-formed relationships with the governing body in their cultural context, such as the Anglican Church that originated directly and indirectly from the Church of England.[41] The American "protest" led to the freedom of ideas, which allowed new sects and denominations to flourish: "Evangelical Protestantism" became a dominant force in America in the 1800s.[42]

During the eighteenth century, America experienced rapid demographic growth and social and political changes. As migrants came to America, the need to expand settlements and commerce created a more mobile society: the itinerant preachers and revivalists also embodied this mobility.[43] The mobility created opportunities for the

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[38] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 17.

[39] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 17.

[40] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 17.

[41] Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, *Second Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 12.

[42] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 17-18.

[43] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 18.

itinerant ministers. It impacted people to seek a "direct relationship with God" to help the "population adjust to the egalitarian society of the nineteenth century."[44] The word "egalitarian" refers to the view that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities, as opposed to the old hierarchical structures of European society.[45] After the War of Independence, many itinerate ministers preached and taught about "freedom and the separation of church and state, and that voluntary association is a primary means of social organization."[46]

Effects of the Great Awakenings on America's Revitalization

The First and Second Great Awakenings resulted from various revival and revitalization elements, including but not limited to critical disconnections in self-understanding, which occurred when the people lost their faith in the legitimacy of its norms, the viability of its institutions, and the polity and authority of its church and its governmental leaders.[47] The eighteenth century was an era of conflict during which rationalism rose, which was "a philosophical view that truth is known through human reasoning."[48] Accordingly, some forms of rationalism were accepted to prove the existence of God; however, others did not validate God's existence through reasoning. The historian Tim Dowley shared the following:

> Everything is to be judged by reason. Belief in God and the supernatural will be swept away; we shall be left with nature and hard facts. But in the seventeenth

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[44] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 18.

[45] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 99.

[46] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 17-18.

[47] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 2.

[48] Dowley et al., *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, 411.

> century, rationalism was not necessarily hostile to belief in God. There were rationalist systems of thought, but common to all was belief in the rationality of the universe and the power of reason to grasp it.[49]

Calvinism stressed man's depravity, untrustworthiness, and worthlessness, while Enlightenment Rationalism stressed humankind's innate goodness, free will, and reasonableness.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758 AD), who started as a local Presbyterian pastor and revivalist, inaugurated the First Great Awakening under his preaching.[50] In 1735, as an associate pastor of a Congregationalist church in Northampton, Massachusetts, he described the "revivalistic fervor" outbreak in his parish as a "surprising work of God."[51] Edwards described and analyzed this outbreak in minute detail citing what happened, believing it was a "genuine work of God, expressing itself in both mental and physical excitement."[52] His written narrative account of the outbreak profoundly affected America and Britain.[53] Through Edwards' preaching, the revival grew. The town of Northampton "never was so full of love, nor joy, yet so full of distress," as described by Edwards.[54] The excitement of the city of Northampton subsided within a couple of years. Still, Edwards was "convinced something had started that would have widespread

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[49] Dowley et al., *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, 437.

[50] Dowley et al., *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, 417.

[51] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 45.

[52] Dowley et al., *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, 416.

[53] Dowley et al., *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, 417.

[54] Dowley et al., *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, 416.

repercussions." He is also noted for one of his most famous sermons, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."[55]

Deism was hostile to the Christian faith after the War of Independence because it suggested that God was an "absentee landlord." God made the world but left it and its inhabitants to their own devices."[56] Intellectual arguments by Deists shared thoughts against prophecies and miracles, such as Old Testament prophecies did not fit Jesus, and that the resurrection was a fraud perpetrated by the disciples, who had stolen Jesus' body.[57]

Finney embraced a prophecy that was more in line with Edwards. They both believed that increasing righteousness would usher in a thousand-year reign of true Christianity that would culminate with Christ's return to earth. However, Finney's view may be considered less pious and less supernatural than Edward's stricter Calvinistic views. In 1835, Finney wrote the following on his beliefs:

> Original sin was not a 'constitutional depravity' but rather a deep-seated 'selfishness' that the people could overcome if they made themselves 'a new heart.' Sin and holiness are voluntary acts of the mind. He was just as clear about the role of the preacher in bringing people to salvation. A revival is not a miracle or dependent on a miracle. It is a purely philosophical result of adequately using the constituted means. God had established no particular system for promoting renewals, and 'new measures' were sometimes necessary.[58]

This type of thinking provided hope for the people to access a God that previously seemed impossible to them. So, this type of evangelicalism had turned into a countrywide

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[55] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 42.

[56] Dowley et al., *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, 442-443.

[57] Dowley et al., *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, 443.

[58] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 38.

movement, which provided a more explosive revitalization than was experienced in the First Great Awakening.[59] This awakening theme created a more straightforward and democratic faith, accorded with the new country's spirit.[60]

I have personally experienced revival and revitalization in my spiritual journey. While pastoring, my past life continually confronted me because former acquaintances recognized me as a man who had been "ruined," had "unclean lips," and "lived among people with unclean lips." I had been "locked in my sinful past" due to various indiscretions, including but not limited to having children out of wedlock, disloyalty with women, and past church dogmas that hindered me from servitude opportunities. These roadblocks haunted me in various ways despite repeated confessions and displays of humility, knowing that I was a sinner but had been saved by God's grace. Although these elements did not satisfy the "perceptions and requirements" of certain observers, I knew that I had received a renewing presence of the Holy Spirit through the "sudden, overwhelming experience of God's grace" while attending the FGBCFI's National Convention in July 2011.

At the convention, I experienced a "wave and wave of liquid love" similar to Finney. This outpouring of God's Spirit in my life allowed me to get a "closer walk" with the Lord. As a result, I now preach a "new theology" rooted and grounded in the Articles of Faith and FGBCFI's Spiritual Distinctives without compromising God's mission.[61] The Fellowship helped me to come out of the "spiritual apartheid" that restricted my

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[59] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 27.

[60] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 28.

[61] Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, *Policy and Procedure Manual*, *Second Edition* (Atlanta, GA: Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, 2016), 11.

desires of spiritual gifts, speaking in a heavenly language, casting out demonic powers, laying on of hands, operating in the Spirit, including women in the ministry, etc.[62] The Holy Spirit flows openly through me amid my praise and worship services. Slowly but surely, this freedom has become a frequent occurrence at MCCBC.

Many of the Presbyterian ministers in western New York preached a theological movement called New Haven Theology (a.k.a. New Theory or Taylorism), which originated at Yale College through Timothy Dwight (1752-1817 AD) and Nathaniel William Taylor (1786-1858 AD) who opposed the strictness of Calvinism.[63] Many of the Calvinist preachers continued to preach that the "fate of men and nations lay in God's mysterious and arbitrary will; so, the imagery is that God might become angry at any time with the country because of materialism, its engrossment in trade and speculation, and its neglect of worship."[64]

The cultural concerns that emerged from the First Great Awakening were theologically Calvinistic, which expressed the country's religious ideology that emphasized the "willingness of God to save [America] of those who truly repented of their sins and stressed God's favor towards a country that [potentially will become the] scene of the millennium."[65] Due to the success of the Revolutionary War (freedom from British rule), the thirteen colonies had a "covenant relationship" called the Constitution of

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[62] Paul S. Morton, *Changing Forward: Experiencing God's Unlimited Power* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 83.

[63] Earl A. Pope, "The Rise of the New Haven Theology," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 44, no. 1 (1966): 24-25.

[64] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 100.

[65] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 98.

the United States.[66] However, new fears arose around 1800 after the War of Independence.

McLoughlin noted that as the country approached the end of the century, it was going through significant growing pains. The new slogan for independence was derived from the Latin phrase *e pluribus unum,* which means "out of many, one." It provided a creed that generated hope and fostered a cohesive sense of identity for the newly formed republic.[67] Yet, fears escalated, and the country lost its revolutionary enthusiasm and commitment. There was general agreement regarding the newly formed republic's achievements and potential. However, there was considerable disagreement on how to proceed, especially after the death of its revolutionary hero and first president, George Washington, in 1799.[68]

The people in the newly formed United States sought a more realistic, less Calvinistic view. During this era of rationalism, McLoughlin noted the following:

> If [humankind's] reason were God-given, as the Calvinists allowed, then the education of that reason would enable [humankind] to comprehend God's ways and act in accord with them, thus advancing the millennium by their increasing knowledge of God's will and laws. This optimistic, self-reliant view was thought to be heretical or blasphemous, which was the thoughts of the Deists, Anglicans, and the new "supernaturalists" called Unitarians and Universalists: God would not put good people in hell.[69]

Calvinists believed there was nothing a sinner could do because of their iniquity, which caused intense frustration for the population living after the war. This idea caused the

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[66] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 98.

[67] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 1.

[68] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 98.

[69] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 100-101.

people to reason that they did not want to accept the theology of the "willingness-to-be-damned" concept of conversation.[70] McLoughlin referred to the prevailing mood in 1800 from the historian Donald Mathews:

> The norms of old life were changing; its stimuli were gone, its manners inapplicable, its conventions often incapable of being. For many people, no educational or religious institutions automatically acted upon them in the same old-shoe familiar way. The revolution created great anticipation for the future, but the kind of future people wanted was not easily realized. The result was a vague uneasiness that created a general susceptibility to a social movement.[71]

Mathew further argued that the Second Awakening was not an intellectual movement but "an organizing process that helped give meaning and direction to people suffering in various degrees from the societal strains of a nation on the move into a new political, economic, and geographical areas."[72]

The country also experienced a divide between the ruling elite and the less fortunate. The elitists were generally well-educated, well-to-do, and well-born and felt that the "common man should dominate and control his representatives."[73] Accordingly, the elitists sought to monopolize the benefits of modernization: professionals, manufacturers, and political allies demanded political influences consistent with their economic status.[74]

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[70] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 107.

[71] Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830," 33.

[72] Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830," 33.

[73] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 99.

[74] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 99.

There were even bitter controversies between the Jeffersonians and Hamiltonians over their political principles and doctrines.[75] Supporters of Jeffersonian views advocated the doctrines of Thomas Jefferson, who stressed minimal central government control, the inalienable rights of individuals, and the superiority of the agricultural economy and rural society; they supported Western expansion. Hamiltonian views were based on the principles and doctrines of Alexander Hamilton, a leading Federalist voice of the time, who believed that the federal government needed to be strong in all aspects of the country. Jefferson thought that a government with too much power would lead to tyranny.[76]

Secondary Leaders and Movements Relevant to the Project

This section covers individuals and their associated movements, which is vital in formulating the hypothesis for MCCBC's move from a traditional worship format to a more charismatic, spirit-led worship environment. One of these individuals is William Joseph Seymour (1870-1922 AD), credited as the leader of the Azusa Street Revival. The other individual is Charles Harrison Mason (1866-1961 AD), a former Baptist cleric who became one of the founders of the COGIC denomination. Both of these individuals have had a profound impact on me. Their journeys have allowed me to feel a sense of affirmation regarding the move of the Spirit upon my life and in leading the context to connect with its spiritual DNA through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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[75] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 99-100.

[76] McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, 99-100.

Seymour was a Black Holiness preacher who studied under Charles Parham (1873-1929 AD), who taught speaking in tongues and kindred doctrines. From his experiences, Seymour took Parham's theological views further and developed the "evidential tongues."[77] He had moved to Los Angeles and preached on the baptism of the Spirit, the anointing of the Spirit, and the gifts of tongues. In April 1906, Seymour and seven others met at 216 North Bonnie Brae Street in Los Angeles, California, the home of one of the members. During an evening service, they fell "under the power" and were "slain in the spirit." After a few days, the news spread about the outpouring of the Spirit, and many people came to the home. The crowds were so large that the group needed to meet in a larger location. They chose a former African Methodist Episcopalian Church location that had been a storeroom at 312 Azusa Street, Los Angeles, California.

The people under Seymour's preaching and teaching experienced being "slain in the spirit," singing in tongues, and people falling to the ground "under the power," which was a common phenomenon. These experiences at the Azusa Street Church allowed the marginalized and disposed individuals to attend daily revivals and have a sense of dignity and community that had been denied them in the larger urban culture regardless of race, gender, and class.[78] Anderson cites that the Azusa Revival Movement was a "revolutionary movement" that allowed the marginalized and disposed to seek God regardless of race, gender, or class. Andersen also states this movement was "the beginning of American Pentecostalism's global outreach."[79]

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[77] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 45.

[78] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 45-49.

[79] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 45.

Mason was the son of formerly enslaved people in Bartlett, Tennessee.[80] Mason's father, a Civil War veteran, died while Mason was a young child. His mother remarried and moved to Arkansas, where the newly formed family became members of a missionary Baptist church. At the age of twelve, Mason underwent a profound conversion experience and was baptized by his stepbrother, who was a pastor at a missionary Baptist church near Plumerville, Arkansas. Mason, however, soon became interested in the holiness movement.

Mason married a young lady in 1890, but she soon objected to being married to a preacher and divorced him in 1893. That year, he attended Arkansas Baptist College but left after three months because he felt "there was no salvation in school or colleges." He later married Leila Washington after his first wife's death.

Mason met Charles Price Jones (1865-1949 AD), a Baptist minister seeking the holiness doctrine. They traveled together to Lexington, Michigan, to encounter the holiness doctrine of entire sanctification.[81] They both accepted and preached the doctrine at Baptist churches in Arkansas. However, they were soon ejected from the Baptist association for preaching and claiming to have received the experience.[82]

Mason and Jones organized a holiness revival in February 1897 in Lexington, Michigan, which became an organizational meeting for COGIC. Mason had settled on this designation while walking down a street in Little Rock, Arkansas. Mason, the dominant personality, incorporated and chartered COGIC in Memphis, Tennessee, in late

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[80] Encyclopedia of Arkansas, "Charles Harrison Mason," 1.

[81] Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century,* Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 70.

[82] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 70.

1897.[83] The church was the first Southern holiness denomination to become legally chartered. As a result, many white ministers of independent holiness congregations received their ordination from Mason, making COGIC an interracial organization.[84]

The interracial characteristics became more apparent after Mason's time spent with the Azusa Street Revival in 1906, when he experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.[85] The interracial characteristics of the church began to wane due to Jim Crow restrictions in southern states. Additionally, Mason and Jones began to have differing views. Jones later founded the Church of Christ (holiness) USA.

Conclusion

The historical view of Charles Grandison Finney serves as the historical foundation of this doctoral ministry project for the context. His work as a revivalist and acknowledged leader of the Second Great Awakening provided steps in the "awakening" experienced by me that prayerfully will be channeled into the context. Finney's historical journey tapped into the historical roots of church worship. Melva Costen stated how, under the power of the Holy Spirit, the church expresses their corporate and personal belief that God in Jesus Christ continues to work for good in every aspect of their lives: the believer "shares many things in common."[86] The community gathers for worship

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[83] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 71.

[84] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 71.

[85] Encyclopedia of Arkansas, "Charles Harrison Mason," 2.

[86] Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship, Second Edition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 1.

from an open invitation from God. Worship is a journey into God's presence, of hearing the Word, sitting at the tables of expectation in celebrating Jesus Christ through our actions (e.g., Lord Supper, baptism, etc.), and then the community is sent into the world changed by their encounter with God.[87] The purpose of gathering for worship is to bring excitement to loving and revering an awesome God.

In constant excitement, church life cannot be sustained psychologically: building the context, foundation, and framework is necessary to maintain everyday life as a Christian community.[88] The church is an organism, a living, breathing entity with life and sustainability through an awesome Trinitarian God. The sporadic renewal that occurs in the church, although an exciting phenomenon, might be a ritualistic, dramatization, and religious life necessary to sustain the hopes of the clergy and to relieve the anxieties of the laity and still not be the primary, which was essential during the Second Great Awakening.[89]

The Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, in all their multifaceted variety, "probably constitute the fastest growing churches within Christianity today."[90] Although it is difficult to find direct standard unifying features or distinctiveness to define these movements, their worship experiences are generally experienced "through baptism with (or in) the Holy Spirit."[91] Allan Anderson shared the following regarding Pentecostalism:

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[87] Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblical Faithful Services*, *Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 58-62.

[88] Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830," 25.

[89] Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830," 25.

[90] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 1.

[91] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 2-3.

> The term Pentecostalism is appropriate for describing all churches and movements globally that emphasize the working of the gifts of the Spirit, both on phenomenological and theological grounds — although not without qualification. A broader definition should emphasize Pentecostalism's ability to incarnate the gospel in different cultural forms. This broad use of 'Pentecostal' will often include the terms Charismatic and Neo-charismatic, but there will be times when Charismatic will refer more narrowly to Pentecostal experience in mainline churches. Perhaps it is appropriate to follow Robert Anderson, who observes that Western classical Pentecostals usually define themselves in terms of the 'doctrine of initial evidence'; Pentecostalism is correctly seen in a much broader context as a movement concerned primarily with the 'experience' of the working of the Holy Spirit and the 'practice' of spiritual gifts.[92]

I seem to resonate more with Robert Anderson's broader definition of Pentecostalism, which is based on the "experience" of the Holy Spirit's work and the "practice" of spiritual gifts.

Based on my interpretation of various readings by historians and my experience as a pastor, I believe that the Black church has never come together for worship without being mindful of its history. The Black church has seldom been locked into a narrow conservatism and fundamentalism that excluded other groups. However, the traditions of MCCBC have been immersed in the church's dogmas rather than experiencing the movement of the Holy Spirit and celebrating the hope of living an eternal life. MCCBC and the ecumenical community are in the midst of a spiritual renewal.

I am committed to leading MCCBC into a season of renewed hope and relevancy for the church's work in the community. This renewal is necessary, especially in light of the declining church attendance. God has been at work "renewing and refreshing" the church throughout history. The Azusa Street Mission Revival is a testament to the revival premise that I seek to develop in the context.

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[92] Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1979), 4.

The Historical Foundational addressed the key figure who provided evidence of how to experience the Spirit through its manifestation. Finney demonstrated how prayer is essential and needed everywhere we go. When God deems it necessary, He sends His Spirit to move and unite the church to seek Him in a powerful and profound way, resulting in faith built through "waves and waves of love." Revivals typically show signs through prayer, repentance, conversions, and other manifestations through the Holy Spirit. The church and I are awaiting the "outbreaks of revival."[93] The next chapter will connect us to a Theological Foundation that helps build the capacity for transformation, establishing a solid basis for developing a practical approach to acknowledging and following the Spirit's charismatic lead.

[93] Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 42.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Engaging in a transformative spiritual journey with God shapes our theology by allowing God to speak through fundamental teachings guided by the Holy Spirit. From personal experiences, these sources of teaching have come through the Bible, commentaries, the Apostles' Creed, the Baptist Articles of Faith, the FGBCFI's Distinctives, and Baptist conventions and conferences, to name a few. The ultimate authority is Jesus, who provided fundamental teachings to His disciples. However, the disciples did not have a complete understanding of all He taught them, such as the signs of the end of the age (Matt. 24:3), that eternal life is available to believers (John 17:1-3), and the coming of the Advocate who will give them everything and remind them of all He had taught them (John 14:26).

This chapter will analyze practical theology as the overarching umbrella for Pentecostalism and Charismatic theologies to implement into the teaching in the context of MCCBC. Historically, the predominantly Black Baptist church operated with a traditional flow of worship style. The Biblical Foundations chapter shared how the MCCBC showed a level of parallelism with the reasons for the Children of Israel's silence when confronted with their "limping with two different opinions" (1 Kings 18:21). This pericope focused on a lesson that the people had to first receive the Lord in their hearts, in their living, and as role models for the community and the nations. The

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel is not a "god" who lives in the things that are the recipients of offerings and prayers. The True God answers prayers and is a relationally-centered God who does not reside in one place like the local deities that foreign nations serve. The God we worship has limitless power that accompanies His true worshippers on every journey.

Parallelism exists between those who were challenged at the mountain range of Mount Carmel and the people of MCCBC, who have shown a propensity to superficial worship and the "Baals" they faced. Elijah's confrontation with the state-supported prophets of Baal and Asherah on the mountain was a significant narrative component for the context, which needs to lean more towards authentic worship that honors the one and true God. The context requires a transformative model from traditional worship to a more charismatic one. If the church's leadership and laity are trained and educated on church renewal and revitalization concepts, then the church would be better equipped to recognize the move of the Holy Spirit. Church renewal is the hope of revitalizing the church when God's people fall into an unfaithful state of existence.[1]

The Historical Foundations chapter focused on Charles Grandison Finney as the primary historical person because of his activities and influences as a revivalist in the nineteenth century as he was a vital leader of the Second Great Awakening.[2] Finney's revivalist activities and teaching at Oberlin College were intent on saving souls, strengthening the church, focusing on prayer as a vital element of worship, expanding the

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[1] Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirt: How God Reshapes the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 42.

[2] Frances Fitzgerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggles to Shape America* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 37.

role of women in the church community, and bringing about social reform.[3] Additional personalities and unique movements of the Spirit, vital to formulating the hypothesis for me and my context, include William Joseph Seymour, credited as the leader of the Azusa Street Revival. The other influential individual is Charles Harrison Mason, a former Baptist cleric who later became one of the founders of the COGIC denomination. All these individuals profoundly impacted my development. The result of the Historical Foundations' analysis has allowed me to feel affirmed in the move of the Spirit upon my life.

The analysis of Finney's activity during the Second Awakening allowed me to visualize the steps in the "awakening" I experienced at the FGBCFI's Annual Conference in 2011. The affirming presence of the suddenness of God that I experienced helped me lead the context to connect with its spiritual DNA through the guidance of the Spirit. I have plans to channel these steps into the context. Melva Costen stated in her book, *African American Christian Worship*, that the church expresses their corporate and personal belief that God, through Jesus Christ, continues to work for good in every aspect of the people of the church, and how the believer "shares many things in common."[4]

The church community gathers for worship in response to an open invitation from God. Worship is a journey into God's presence, hearing the Word, and sitting at the tables of expectation in celebrating Jesus through one's actions, such as at the Lord's

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[3] Barry Hankins, *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 137.

[4] Melva Wilson Costen, *African American Christian Worship, Second Edition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 1.

Supper, baptism, and the contribution of tithes and offerings.[5] The journey then leads as to being sent into the world changed by our encounter with God. The purpose of gathering corporately for worship is to bring about the excitement of serving a loving and awesome God (Heb. 10:19-25).[6]

Analysis of the Theological Theme

Theology is necessary for the church's life because it helps the church interpret the narrative of God, the world, the history of Israel, and the revelation of events that lead to salvation.[7] I learned from my UTS's theology class that theology comes from the Greek word *theos,* meaning "God," and *logos,* meaning "word."[8] Accordingly, theology is a structured, systematic study of God's natural attributes, purposes, and ministry. The four main topics of theology are listed in the order in which they are presented in the Bible and in the creeds: God (Trinity and revelation), creation (providence and humanity), reconciliation (sin, Christology, the church), and redemption (eschatology) or end times).[9] Therefore, theologians engage in "God-talk" or a language that speaks to the people. Seeking God through the inspired word, as provided in the Old and New

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[5] Constance M. Cheery, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblical Faithful Services, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2021), 58-62.

[6] Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 520-530.

[7] Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology, Third Edition* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 2.

[8] Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms. Second Edition* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 317.

[9] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 13.

Testament scriptures, is fundamental to Jesus Christ.[10] The Bible tells readers that "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

The church has a vital mission to speak to God about the activities occurring in the world. The church is assigned to express to the world through words, deeds, and how Christians live.[11] God sends the church on a diplomatic mission as "ambassadors of God" and to speak to the world on His behalf (2 Cor. 5:20).

The ancient view of a pastor was as a theologian.[12] Wilson and Hiestand comment that the role of pastor-theologian leads to their participation in the renewal of theology and the church in their ministry and mission to the world. These "shepherds" of the people of God must communicate to the people in plain language that is "winning, witty, and engaging," but should be readable and plain enough for all who want to read.[13] Wilson and Hiestand provide descriptors on a wide-ranging and challenging vocation of the pastoral ministry as listed below:

> The ideal pastor would have the rhetorical panache of a Churchill, the compassion of Mother Teresa, the tenacity and courage of a Navy Seal, the intellect of a lawyer, the patience of Job, the vision of Ezekiel, the creativity of an entrepreneur, the management skills of a CEO, and the magnetic energy of a rock star. They must be exemplary in their devotion to Jesus and the uprightness of their character. And they must be everywhere for everything.[14]

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[10] Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible. Volume 2* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1915.

[11] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 2.

[12] Todd A. Wilson and Gerald Hiestand, *Becoming a Pastor Theologian: New Possibilities for Church Leadership* (Downers Grove, Il: Intervarsity Press, 2016), 10.

[13] Wilson, *Becoming a Pastor Theologian*, 18.

[14] Wilson, *Becoming a Pastor Theologian*, 30.

These descriptors seem to "hit the nail on the head" from experience as the senior pastor of the context. Being a pastoral care provider is essential in leading a church. There are four main parts of theology that is considered for this analysis: (1) biblical theology that expounds on the meaning of the Bible; (2) historical theology is a study how the church has interpreted the Bible and Christian faith; (3) systemic theology is defined as the explanation of Christian faith and the testing of the church's language; and (4) practical theology which is the study of the norms, principles, and visions that guides the practices of the church and its members.[15]

The way that the people of God come to know Him is through God's self-revelation. Thomas and Wondra share that God continues to be revealed in two special ways: through the testimony in the Bible (e.g., in Exod. 34:6-8 where Moses falls prostrated before the Lord) and through the testimony of the church in its preaching, sacraments, teaching, common life, and action.[16] An example of God's self-revelation is found in the scriptures. After Moses received the second tablets of the law, the glory of God passed by him (Exod. 34:1-8). Moses then immediately lay down in a prostrated position in worship because he "saw himself with new insight."[17] Prostration was a position of adoration by one falling upon their knees and gradually inclining until the

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[15] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 17.

[16] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 36.

[17] Douglas Stuart, *Exodu*s, *The New American Commentary, Volume 2* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 717-718.

forehead touched the ground. This expression was considered to show reverence and humility, especially in worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[18]

Alan Cairns shares that theology is not only tied to the works of God but also how humankind and history relate to Him.[19] The church has a mission to speak to God about its activities, such as worship, preaching, instructions, social actions, pastoral care, prayer, and everyday life.[20] However, the Christian life is not the sole normative of theology, but it is a key element of theology.

Pastors as theologians must use God-talk wisely. Every person who talks about their faith in God, whether that person has faith in God or not, is a theologian, including atheists.[21] The pastor as a theologian needs to be careful of the "hidden assumptions" carried in the traditions and norms that carry an implied fact that they are always accurate and infallible.[22] Theology cannot completely define God. The reality is that theology is not like math or science, where there are fundamental rules of logic to follow. Theology is more like a road map that contains certain mysteries. Accordingly, pastors and theologians struggle with an understanding of God because He is incomprehensible, yet the believers try to communicate with one another about who God is or is not.[23] Thomas and Wondra further comment that the pastor and theologian's communication can only

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[18] Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Everett F. Harrison, Roland Harrison, and William LaSor, eds., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 1: A-D* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 55.

[19] Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms, Expanded Third Edition* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 483.

[20] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 2.

[21] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 2.

[22] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 47.

[23] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 47.

reveal who God is through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. I have discovered in my spiritual journey that when God tells us or reveals Himself through the person's experiences, we need to hold on to what we know.

Theology aims to express the reality of God and His revelation to the world.[24] This reality signifies the ultimate norm for the church, which is to seek God's divine revelation by the direction of the Holy Spirit. The Bible is one of the tools that communicates God's revelation.[25] One of the main tasks of theology is to examine, and at times, criticize the traditions, practices, and dogmas established in the church.[26] Thomas and Wondra comment that these established practices of the church are often structured as "absolute and irreformable" elements, making them more of the object of the believer's faith; faith in these established practices is unchangeable.[27]

Richard Sokolowski shared the views of Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109 AD), who wrote about the distance between established norms that make claims over one's faith.[28] Sokolowski stated that Anselm shared his thoughts concerning belief and unbelief are not in the same way one thinks of creeds, but rather the being of God.[29] Anselm further commented that he "does not try to understand in order to believe but believes in order to understand." This rationale implies that the pastor-theologian needs to become

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[24] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 48.

[25] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 49.

[26] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 59.

[27] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 59.

[28] Brian Davies and Gillian Evans, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2008), vii.

[29] Robert Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason: Foundations of Christian Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 6.

skillful in acknowledging and being steadfast in the mystery of their faith.[30] Anselm cited that his argument about reason versus faith came from his "appreciation that reason and Christian faith can both be themselves without threatening one another."[31]

My thoughts regarding theology have moved me to reflect on my experiences and teachings from scripture. This brings my faith and confession towards a better understanding of my relationship with God. The gift of faith drives believers to a better articulation and understanding of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). The pastor-theologian, through reflection, can communicate God-talk based on the elements of faith to a particular season "for we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

I was confronted with several encounters after I was named the senior pastor of MCCBC in 2002. These encounters significantly impacted me as the under-shepherd of the context. The congregation did not necessarily condemn me for my encounters with God, but rather my teaching and preaching approach. One example of this condemnation was delivered in a letter that had been hand-delivered to the church's mailbox after the first two months of my pastorate. The letter was from a person who did not indicate who they were and did not include a return address. However, the nearly two-page, handwritten letter appears to have been done by a senior church member. The letter is no longer available because it was mysteriously removed from my office. However, I have cognitively retained the essence of the letter due to its impact on me and as a reminder of how critical people can be when change has impacted them. This is a paraphrased summation of the salient points contained in the letter: Pastor, whatever type of preaching

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[30] Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason*, 8.

[31] Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason*, 6.

or teaching you call yourself doing, you need to be considerate to the people in the pews. We need the service to be done by 1:30 PM so that we can go home to take our prescriptions and other medications (Note: worship service spanned from 11:00 AM until 1:45 PM during that time). We did not bring you here to teach us. We are not in school to learn whatever it is you call your kind of preaching. The pastors we are familiar with over the years don't take the time you apparently need to complete your lesson. You seem to be a smart and nice person, but you do not seem to understand the people at this church. So, in the future, please complete your kind of preaching and teaching within the expected timeframe.

Although I did not use any graphology techniques to try to identify the individual or his/her character, I believed the person was an older member of the congregation and most likely a female due to the handwriting style. I later talked about the letter at an impromptu church meeting to discuss my expository preaching style. The members in attendance seemed to accept my preaching style. No further references or comments were ever raised about the letter or the writer's identity. My previous training as a youth pastor, various Baptist training unions, conferences, seminary classes, and on-the-job training with my former pastor had not prepared me for the practical concerns that continuously were raised by various congregants.

Within a month of the meeting, a member of the trustee board approached me and shared that he "needs to start afresh with this church because of its general lack of biblical training." The trustee further commented that prior pastors "meant well" in their presentations, but they lacked structured training. Only one of the previous pastors had

attended formal education beyond high school. This pastor was characterized as a gifted and innovative teacher and preacher, but he ran into similar roadblocks.

The trustee stressed that the church had not previously experienced the level of teaching and preaching from prior pastors. Those pastors were mainly characterized as "good to excellent hoopers." The pastor previously referenced even tried to introduce MCCBC to the teachings of the FGBCFI in 1993, in that he believed in the charismatic move of the Spirit. However, he was not successful. Ultimately, he left the church and started a new church upon MCCBC's refusal to consider the change. The church wanted to remain with its traditional dogmas. I was not aware of these struggles of this pastor until a historical timeline meeting was held with MCCBC's current members.

During my first six years at MCCBC, I found it difficult to deliver an effective Christian theology based on sound preaching and teaching. The teaching and preaching of most of the former pastors seemed to lack a focus on Jesus and the coming kingdom of God. Jon Ruthven summarizes in his book that the traditional dogmas of the church avoid the emphasis of Scripture. He stated, "It's a human tendency to glorify past religious heroes as a way of avoiding present, painful truth."[32] I believe that a form of legalism was practiced at MCCBC. The church followed its known dogmas, rules, and practices inherent in its environment. This attitude helped the people to be "good and acceptable to God" rather than to achieve an ascetical proficiency such as self-discipline and refraining from all luxury forms of desires and pleasures to do God's will.[33]

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[32] Jon M. Ruthven, *What's Wrong with Protestant Theology? Tradition vs. Biblical Emphasis* (Lee's Summit, MO: Christos Publishing, 2022), 3.

[33] Simon Chan, *Spiritual Theology: A Systematic Study of Christian Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 190.

I have been on a spiritual walk with God, who has transformed me several times along my journey. I have experienced transformation from the deep and penetrating hurts and sufferings over the years from my family, relationships with women, and even hurt from various persons in the churches I attended. This transformational period has allowed me to move from merely understanding and appreciating how to turn from surviving to thriving by God's grace.

I had to encounter the Lord at my own "Mount Carmel" experience. In order for me to be the conduit for "removing systemic strongholds" in the context, I needed to experience the renewal and revitalization of the Holy Spirit through a Pentecostal experience. (Acts 1:5, 9; 2:1-4). I needed to experience the indwelling presence of God before I could reveal the type of worship God expected His people to engage in rather than "limping between two different opinions" like the people of Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:21). This was a personal challenge on me at MCCBC to be more effective and willing to handle the assignment to have God-talk with His people.

I had to first "repair the altar of the Lord" in my life because the Saturday evening prayers and Bible studies established when I was a child had been torn down (1 Kings 18:30). Unfortunately, my training from the various Baptist training unions, seminary and secular classes, and on-the-job pastoral training did not prepare me for situations such as the circumstances described and how to truly repair the altar. During this period of my journey, I felt burdened by losing my focus on my calling. Ruthven even warned potential students how one could lose their spiritual vision and purpose if the focus is lost

on the intellectual focus, the sermon manuscript, and other traditional theological practices and activities related to how a person preaches or teaches.[34]

These challenges led me to seek advice from other seasoned pastors in the city to help me find my way back to the calling that God had assigned to me. Several senior pastors in the area provided various thoughts, options, solutions, and remedies. However, the Columbus District Overseer of the FGBCFI gave me the most life-changing advice. He suggested that I attend the Fellowship's annual convention. The overseer was very familiar with the context and the struggles of the previous pastors at MCCBC. He believed that the senior pastor needed a stronger connection to the DNA of the Triune God. I hesitated to accept the invitation for roughly a year. The overseer insisted that FGBCFI was meant for me. I finally yielded to the overseer's request due to the proximity of the 2011 FGBCFI's annual convention.

The 2011 annual conference took place during the ninth year of my pastorate. The worship service, held in Louisville, Kentucky, was so profound that I still have trouble finding the words to explain it. Barbara Holmes shared a similar experience that is quoted in her book, which is quoted below:

> The experience that I have just described was not expected. The worship was inspirational . . . In the midst of worship, an imperceptible shift occurred that moved the worshipping community from intentional liturgical action to transcendent indwelling. There is no way to describe this shift other than to say that 'something happened' . . .the perpetual restlessness of the human heart was stilled and transformed into abiding presence. Time shimmered and paused, slowing its relentless pace, and the order of worship no longer took precedence for those enthralled by a joy unspeakable.[35]

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[34] Ruthven, *What's Wrong with Protestant Theology?*, 4.

[35] Barbara A. Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church, Second Edition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), xx.

I felt the same "imperceptible (invisible, undetectable) shift" in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in my life during this conference. I unexpectedly began to pray in an unknown tongue and felt something grab my heart with unspeakable joy. There was a shift where "something happened." It was the forever-altering connection of my DNA makeup. This revelation on how to rebuild the altar had come about in my attendance at the FGBCFI conference and my continual reflection upon the scriptures.

This was a personal encounter with God that demanded me to "walk by faith and witness God's revelation of His divine purpose" upon me and MCCBC.[36] It was revealed, through the dynamic interaction of action and reflection, that God wanted to remove the systemic strongholds in the context. The divine praxis had to first be experienced in my life. I came to realize that "God's act of reconciliation is simultaneously God's word of revelation."[37] In other words, the God that changed me, the senior pastor of MCCBC, is the same God that showed up at the confrontation on the mountain range of Mount Carmel. I have heard many pastors over the years express that "if God did it once, He can do it again."

I realized that the prophetic word of God must stretch beyond the boundaries of my own wisdom and knowledge. I needed to trust God with my heart and lean on God's understanding (Prov. 3:5-6). This divine revelation led me to seek further training that was more meaningful. As a result, I began attending the FGBCFI Propel Leadership Conferences each year. The leadership training I attended was designed to empower and

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[36] Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 11.

[37] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 11.

educate the churches. I continue to attend various conferences and conventions of the Fellowship.

In 2022, the former recruiter for UTS approached me and asked me to consider attending UTS. This was a prophetic move because I had just completed several training sessions with the context that was aligning them with the move of the Spirit in God's time. I felt the need for a higher "theological language," a God language that would rise above the context's thoughts, feelings, and emotions, especially in light of the early pastoral challenges I had encountered.[38]

Although I faced the early challenges in my journey, I was thankful for God's providence over the early situations I faced. I was later told by the trustee that the person who wrote the unsolicited, two-page, handwritten letter kept coming to church; however, the trustee never revealed that person's identity. This was a growth moment for me because it meant "that they were not yet defeated" and were looking for a word from the Lord (Jer. 37:17).[39]

Conclusion

Ruthven shared that the Bible sets a pattern "that the whole world comes into being and is affirmed by the powerful word of God."[40] Ruthven further states "that faith

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[38] Thomas, *Introduction to Theology*, 15.

[39] Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable*, 69.

[40] Ruthven, *What's Wrong with Protestant Theology?*, 55.

is being in God's word of life and power."[41] So, the emphasis is on the word and the power that emanates from God.

The doctrine of theology has to do with the church and its trinitarian relationship with God. This means that the church, the *ecclesia*, has a particular relationship with each person of the Trinity. The Apostle Paul provides a rich and powerful message about how the people of God are connected to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-17).[42]

The Spirit is foundational to the people and the church's connection to God. The Spirit's humility and the power of the Spirit's character cover the members and the church. The believers share in the Spirit's humility and her power. The Spirit comes to live in the believers, but it is not just an occasional visit because the Spirit takes up residence in God's people.[43] The Spirit brings the people of God in union with Christ; "the union of the believers to Christ is the only way into the life of the Age to Come."[44] Central to the Spirit is how she connects the believers to the union of the Trinity. Paul says that when Christ lives in the believer, the body, which is the human spirit, is dead because of sin. However, "the Spirit (that lives in the believer) gives life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:10). The continued gospel, good news, is that the "Spirit of the resurrecting Father lives in believers."[45] As such, the believers are in union with Christ

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[41] Ruthven, *What's Wrong with Protestant Theology?*, 55-56.

[42] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 307-318.

[43] Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 277.

[44] Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 277.

[45] Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 278.

because “the Spirit Himself testifies with our Spirit that we are God’s children” (Rom. 8:14). The believers are the church that is tied to the Son by the power of the Spirit. The believers are united by God’s grace which gives us union with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I experienced a more practical approach in my service to an awesome God. The growth in my faith has helped me to go beyond the theoretical paradigms learned in my studies, and my faith has helped me to go beyond my human knowledge.[46] Anderson challenges readers of “postmodernism in acknowledging the importance of communities in our knowing.”[47] I have embraced the move towards a divine praxis, which combines action and reflection to seek transformation.[48] This move of the Spirit into the dynamic work of how God transforms His people has assisted me in further understanding Anderson’s statement regarding how “modernism is not Christian, and we can rejoice in its overthrow.”[49] Below are three examples of how the Lord is shaping MCCBC through His empowerment ministry with theological praxis.

MCCBC is in the midst of preparing for a 100th Church Anniversary celebration, scheduled for June 8, 2025. In preparation, the anniversary committee had asked members to consider various tiers of giving, above and beyond their tithes and offerings. This type of financial commitment had never been asked of the church members. During a church service in August 2024, a mother and her young adult daughter, who lived in a

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[46] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 16.

[47] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 20.

[48] Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, Second Edition* (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 245.

[49] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 20.

city about two hours from Columbus, showed up to the in-person service. They normally listen to the worship service on Facebook. Prior to the service, they asked me for permission to make a presentation for the church anniversary. The daughter provided a heartwarming, tear-jerking, two-minute talk, sharing how she had been saving her "spare" change in three large jars for the past three years. She told how she heard me share in one of the Agape Connections (virtual youth church) how the church building and property are in need of repairs. She shared that she was able to save a mid-four-figure amount. Her mother matched her donation dollar-for-dollar. They presented a five figured check to the church. Momentum of tier giving has rocketed at the church since.

Another praxis moment occurred during September 2024. A former musician of the church texted me following a Sunday morning worship service. She commented that she had watched the service. She expressed jubilation in the rich power of the word. She shared how the "power-driven sermon certainly blessed (her) soul." Her comments stated how she heard the "Apostolic sound" from the word delivered on that day. She stated how the word "kept on ringing" in her heart, mind, and soul. Accordingly, she sent a love offering to the church and provided words of encouragement to me to continue the assignment that God has placed on my heart. The sermon she listened to was entitled, "I've Got Nothing But the Holy Ghost," based on the anchor text from Luke 3:17.

The final praxis event occurred at a Columbus District Fellowship meeting. The situation shows the power of the "ongoing ministry of Christ through the power and the presence of the Spirit of Christ that constitutes the praxis of God's mission to the world through the church and its ministry."[50] While serving as overseer of the district of

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[50] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 31.

FGBCFI, I shared a particular point in a meeting with the leadership team. One of the attendees was a non-member of any of the district churches. However, he reluctantly joined the meeting with his mother as he was her driver for the day.

At a certain point in the meeting, the gentleman made a discouraging remark to me. It appeared that he tried to throw in a comical remark at an intense moment of the meeting. I abruptly admonished the comment and stated how unnecessary and unwanted the comment was. The next day, I made a call to the driver's mother to follow up with her on another matter. After their discussion, the mother raised her displeasure that I had embarrassed her son in the meeting. I used Robert's Rules of Order techniques to address her response and concerns. After a period of spirited discussion, the mother apologized for not considering my need to effectively maintain control of the meeting.

Later that same day, I began reading a passage from Anderson's book. I read where Anderson shared a story about a pastor whose "real issue (in solving a personality conflict) was his own theology of holiness in tension with the praxis of the Spirit of Jesus at work in the lives of the people in his congregation (in this case, in the District)."[51] I was able to see that I failed to be a "pastoral care provider" in the sense of the ministry of Jesus. Finding ways to remove "stumbling blocks" in the manner Jesus did would resolve this situation. Paul shares that we should "Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires" (Rom. 13:14).

After the "dynamic action and reflection" on the above encounter, I called the mother and invited her and her son to go to dinner with my wife and me. She hesitated and said, "Let me get back to you." When there was no return call, I called her again. She

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[51] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 37.

immediately and graciously accepted. My wife and I went to pick them up in my car and drove them to the restaurant. The dinner was a great fellowship of laughter and dialogue. The dinner allowed me, as the district overseer to remove the "stumbling blocks" by the grace of God.

I have been reflective of my encounters. There is the acknowledgement of how God-talk reaches others through virtual mediums, but also how there is a need for action and reflection that could create a shift that will reflect the glory of God in one's actions. Anderson shared a key point regarding Jesus' ministry:

> The ministry of Jesus to the Father on behalf of the world is the inner logic of all (ministries). Every aspect of the ministry of Jesus is grounded in the inner relation of mutual love and care between the Father and the Son. On behalf of the world, Jesus offers up to the Father a ministry of prayer, worship, obedience, and service. His ministry is first of all directed to God and not to the world. The needs of the world are recognized and brought into this ministry, but do not set the agenda.[52]

As the pastor of MCCBC, I am prepared to guide the transition from traditional worship practices to the normalcy of a Spirit-filled experience whereby corporate worship welcomes the power of the Spirit. I have experienced revival, revitalization, and transformation in my spiritual journey. While some memories may be overwhelming at times, God is the ultimate agent of change for a "wretch undone." The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost has given me new life as part of the gathered body of Christ. I am empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve Jesus Christ.[53] The next chapter on Interdisciplinary Foundation will provide ways to manage a changing environment in the way we worship and celebrate the Lord's goodness and His glory.

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[52] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 42.

[53] Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, 43.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

The interdisciplinary discipline selected for the doctoral ministry project is "transformation." *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* defines "transform" as "a change in composition or structure, or to change the outward form or appearance, or to change in character or condition (convert)."[1] So, the word transformation is the act, process, or instance of being transformed. Some of the transformation theories that will be considered for the context at MCCBC will be centered on church renewal theories, the theory of reasoned action, and organizational change theory. For change to occur, there must be an organized process to formalize change for the environment.

MCCBC is primarily governed by the Baptist Articles of Faith, the church's Constitution and By-Laws, and the Baptist Church Covenant. The church is aligned with various local associations, including the Eastern Union Missionary Baptist Association, the Ministerial Alliance, and the Baptist Pastors' Conference of Columbus and Vicinity, which are all aligned with the national Baptist organization called the National Baptist Convention, USA. The church is also affiliated with the Columbus Baptist Association, a local chapter tied to the national organization of the American Baptist Convention. As a

[1] *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "transform," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transform.

result of its historical ties to traditional Baptist organizations, MCCBC is experiencing the religious pluralism many Baptist churches have seen.[2]

Religious pluralism is defined as the "state of being where every individual in a religiously diverse society has the rights, freedoms, and safety to worship, or not, according to their conscience."[3] A preliminary observation by me shows that the context has experienced social changes in its fabric through the church's demography, culture, and organization over the years. The church has historically shied away from experiencing the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Long-standing members have stated that "they are not a Pentecostal or Holiness church."

Since COVID-19, many congregants have accessed other worship services via television and online services. Several pastors in my circle have expressed that a fair number of their church members watch other services on Sunday mornings from their homes and throughout the week. So, the exclusivity of church members attending their church service is no longer their only option. My general conversations with individuals at MCCBC suggest this same narrative exists in the context. Additionally, they often watch charismatic enriched services.

This informal survey suggests the church community is in the midst of a church refresh among my minister peers' churches. Thus, a church renewal seems warranted. A renewal revitalizes the church when God's people fall into an "unfaithful state of

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[2] Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 43.

[3] Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, Second Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 239.

existence."[4] For example, in the political climate experienced during the 2024 presidential campaign and election, the Lord has sent a "powerful delusion" for the unbelievers to trust what is false (2 Thess. 2:10-12). The unbelievers put their faith in erroneous and fraudulent information because of their love for false sounds and wonders; it, therefore, has its place in the purpose of God[5] (2 Thess. 2:9). However, God provides hope to believers to come together in prayers and calls to action for the truth and glory of God. Accordingly, God is reshaping, renewing, and refreshing His church at various stages throughout history, always to do what is good and give thanks to God.[6]

In recent years, the worship structure at MCCBC has been altered by such occurrences as coronavirus disease (COVID-19), work-from-home initiatives, and other vital, life-changing events. I believe God allows His people to seek Him to understand necessary changes. While recognizing that the church is not merely a physical building, the church needs to know why attendance is diminishing, and it appears unpopular due to its perceived lack of relevance. I recognize one of the "opportunity costs" is the perceived alternative benefit of worshipping in virtual spaces and socially distanced environments. This contradicts the explicit scripture in Hebrews 10:25, which tells us "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."[7] However, the implicit message tells us we must come

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[4] Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 43.

[5] Paul Ellingworth and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians* (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 1975), 178.

[6] Ellingworth, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Thessalonians*, 179.

[7] Michael D. Coogan, Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with The Apocrypha, Revised Fifth Edition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 2,158.

together in whatever medium as long as the community gathers "in His name" (Matt. 18:20). These paradigm shifts and pivots are necessary to review the impacts of traditionalism that have stifled the church's relevancy in a changing landscape.

MCCBC has not historically acknowledged the "outpouring of the Holy Spirit" in its worship services. However, I have introduced elements of a more charismatic atmosphere through songs, prayers, sermonic topics, and teachings. These efforts have been intertwined in the fabric of the worship since 2019. I have moved the church to a position where it accepts my stance in my membership with the FGBCFI since 2011.

The Fellowship is not a denomination, but a movement led by its founder, Bishop Paul S. Morton, a Baptist pastor, who grew up in a Pentecostal church in Canada. He began pastoring a Louisiana Baptist church in 1972, where he introduced the church to Pentecostal and charismatic elements. The Spirit later led him to form the Fellowship in 1993. This Fellowship helped him to lead other Baptist pastors in their experiences with the Holy Spirit.[8]

Bishop Morton founded this Fellowship in response to the teachings of many conservative Baptist bodies, which believe that spiritual gifts are generally no longer available to the church or that its operations have ceased. He was inspired to overcome the "Spiritual Apartheid" roadblock that historically restricted the charismatic move of the Spirit in such elements as speaking in a heavenly language, casting out demonic powers, laying on of hands, operating in the Spirit, and including women in the ministry.[9]

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[8] Paul S. Morton, *Changing Forward: Experiencing God's Unlimited Power* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 83.

[9] Morton, *Changing Forward*, 83.

I introduced various concepts and teachings I have gained from workshops and teachings from the Fellowship. I intend to move MCCBC to look for a "new" normal of worship. If the church returns to the "normal" worship it engaged in before the pandemic, it will likely continue to participate in old habits and practices of "doing" church. MCCBC needs to establish a "normalcy" that restores rhythms and relationships experienced in the past but in a post-pandemic atmosphere of worship without compromising the church's missions of bringing reconciliation and salvation to the unchurched, unsaved, lost, and disenfranchised individuals. The context requires transforming from traditional worship to a more charismatic one. If the church's leadership and laity are trained and educated on church renewal and revitalization, the church would be more equipped to recognize the move of the Holy Spirit.

Analysis of the Interdisciplinary Premise

The book *Good to Great* shares that "Good is the enemy of Great," which is one of the key reasons so few organizations become great.[10] Jim Collins cited that the United States does not have great schools and governments because it primarily settles just to have good schools. Since few people lead excessive or extraordinary lives, many individuals settle for a "good life."[11]

By training, I am an analyst based on my secular education, including an undergraduate degree in accounting and an MBA with an emphasis in finance and real estate. Collins' book was very relevant to me in that I am bi-vocational as an underwriter

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[10] Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York, NY: Harper Business, 2001), 1.

[11] Collins, *Good to Great*, 1.

at a major commercial bank. I constantly assessed risks when lending to organizations and companies needing a loan. Although the church has organizational features in its structure, it is also an organism of living bodies of believers who each have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This perspective helps me as a pastor to reassess the church's needs from another point of view. I will explore what defines a "good" church rather than imposing the framework of a "good to great" consumer-driven church model on MCCBC.

A good church is fundamentally a God-centered worship center committed to faithful preaching of the gospel and living and displaying the gospel message.[12] The authors of the book, *A Church Called Tov (Tov),* express that the local church needs a "host of wounded healers."[13] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* states that *tov* is a Hebrew word for "good" that implies something more than fulfills the purpose for which it is created. The example cited in the dictionary was the "tree of the knowledge of good (tov) and evil (ra)."[14] A father and daughter teamed up to author the book from their hurt while attending a popular church they had previously attended. They believe that wounded healers and wounded resistors are women and men who did good things by telling the truth as they suffered through rejection, intimidation, and revictimization.[15] These individuals are the ones who persevered through difficult treatment. These individuals

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[12] Scott McKnight and Laura Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020), 2.

[13] McKnight, *A Church Called Tov*, 7.

[14] *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "*tov*," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mazal%20tov.

[15] McKnight, *A Church Called Tov*, 7.

draw upon their personal stories of hurt, betrayal, and loss. This realization of looking at MCCBC from another view helped me to look at my spiritual journey.

Church culture can become toxic. The authors of *Tov* stated that their research shows that every church has a culture that reinforces beliefs and behaviors that are guided by the leaders of the church.[16] Leaders provide certain narratives, teachings, actions, and policies that establish the particular culture. McKnight provides the following warning signs that a church's culture may be toxic: (1) narcissism and (2) power through fear. The authors of *Tov* provided the following seven elements that nurture a "goodness culture" free from toxicity: (1) empathy and compassion, (2) grace and graciousness, (3) putting people first, (4) truth-telling, (5) justice, (6) service, and (7) Christlike behaviors.[17] The authors of *Tov* believe churches that process these characteristics will resist the abuse of power, promote a healing environment, and eradicate the toxic fallout that infects many Christian organizations.[18]

The church should not be stigmatized just as a business entity, but as a living, breathing organism made up of a community of believers striving to be like Christ.[19] The church should focus on soul work and confessing sin. The *ecclesia* (the church) is about the relationship and its "community being known, loving and being loved, serving and being served."[20] The New Testament describes the church in various ways: a local

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[16] McKnight, *A Church Called Tov*, 14.

[17] McKnight, *A Church Called Tov*, 94.

[18] McKnight, *A Church Called Tov*, 8, 94.

[19] Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms. Second Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 53.

[20] McKnight, *A Church Called Tov*, 214-215.

assembly of baptized believers in Jesus who meet regularly for instructions in the word, fellowship, and prayer (Acts 2:42).[21] The church is also described as a family or household that displays and protects the truth (1 Tim. 3:14-15).[22] The church is a holy temple founded on Jesus Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:20-21).[23]

The skills of individuals come about through a lifelong process of development. A person will go through this process throughout their pilgrimage from infancy to their passage from this life. As the senior pastor of MCCBC, I have seen people constantly experiencing transitions as they travel the highway to Zion. In Psalm 84:5, the psalmist tells of those who travel through the valley of Baca, the valley of weeping, and how they will harness powers for continued growth, renewal, and improvement.[24] The traveler's power is generated by their trust in an awesome God as they "go from strength to strength" (Ps. 84:6). These narratives tell that transitions are an essential part of life, and as such, people must learn how to navigate and prepare for the journey. It is clear that the way to God is not as lonely a travail or trackless journey as it may seem, but sojourners ought to be well prepared.[25] As such, lifelong pilgrims press on more eagerly than before

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[21] John Polhill, *Acts*, *The New American Commentary, Volume 26* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 118-120.

[22] George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 182.

[23] Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary, Volume 10*, *Second edition*. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989), 96.

[24] Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150: An Introduction and Commentary, Volume 16* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 336.

[25] Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 336.

because they know that God is following at a distance and close quarters, since our faith and love grow with each experience.[26]

One of my professional associates shared that I need to be mindful that the people have not historically fully captured my vision for the paradigms of worship and praxis. He cautioned that they may resist if they have never envisioned what I, as the pastor, have experienced. The professional associate shared a story of how his mother's meatloaf was dry and tasteless, so he did not like it. However, he shared how his wife has an amazing meatloaf recipe. Their children would ask for it for dinner and ask to invite their friends over to the house to eat with them. They now have the recipe written on cards because other families have requested it. This story prompted me to review how to manage transitions. The book *Managing Transitions* states the following:

> It isn't the changes that will do you in; it's the transitions. They aren't the same thing. Change is situational . . . transition, on the other hand, is psychological; it is a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about . . . when a change happens without the people going through a transition, it is just a rearrangement of the chairs.[27]

As the senior pastor of MCCBC, I recognized that shifting the congregational paradigms in its worship may be difficult. I believe that the removal of systematic strongholds is key in the shift of the context's worship. I believe that it is vital for the church's future as a relevant worship center to "experience God's unlimited power," as these words are contained in the title of Bishop Morton's book. However, as the professional associate shared with me, I need to exercise caution and not presume that

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[26] Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 336-337.

[27] William Bridges and Susan Mitchell Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*. *Fourth Edition* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2016), 3.

everyone will be delighted for this change without them going through the transition. Those congregants who are tied to traditionalism may become disenchanted, defiant, and depressed due to the lack of transition. I recognize that transition can be psychological and will take time for people to process.

There are three phases of transition discussed in the book *Managing Transitions*.[28] The first phase of transition is called "The New Beginning Zone." This phase is the letting go of the old ways and the old identity people had. This phase is important to deal with the feeling of lost the people may experience (e.g., lost traditions). The second phase of transition is called "The Neutral Zone." Going through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new is not fully operational. The third and final phase of transition is called "Ending, Losing, Letting Go Zone." This reflects the coming out of the transition and making a new beginning when people develop a new identity, experience a new energy, and discover a new sense of purpose that makes the change begin to work. Several years ago, the beginning phases had been prophetically placed on my heart, mind, soul, and strength. I did not understand in 2018 why God told me to let down my net when I had been toiling for fifteen years with very few fish caught (Luke 5:4). I was ready to give up and move on. However, I said, "Yet if you say so, I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5).

The "net" in this situation was for me to utilize my skills as a banker and teacher to perform a SWOT Analysis on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the church. This activity was performed in 2019 and was entitled the "5-Year Strategic Plan: Renew, Refresh & Ignite." The Lord revealed to me that this would be in

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[28] Bridges and Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 5.

preparation for the context of the 100th Anniversary in 2025. The elements of "renewal" were to assess the things the church had done correctly; "refresh" was to develop plans to get a fresh look at where the church might be missing the mark; and "ignite" was to look at the opportunity to spark the imagination of the people on what the church could look like in five years. The activity reviewed environmental factors such as the religious experience (charismatic worship formats), suppliers for churches, buyers (congregants and visitors), and substitutions to coming to MCCBC (e.g., technology, political concerns, Bedside Baptist). The strengths considered were youth support (at that time), a hospitable environment, and volunteerism. Some of the weaknesses cited include funding of youth programs, outdated technology at the church, lack of involvement by general membership, and church location. Opportunities cited include a more spiritual focus, communication for senior activities, and increased parental involvement. Threats included increased outside youth activities (e.g., AAU programs), the need for training for trustees, deacons, and ministers, and exclusionary activities (e.g., lack of accessible senior programs). The summation of the activity was that the pulse of the church was critical to address now. I received high praise from members of this activity, particularly because they were permitted five votes when choosing their top five items of concern.

I was then tasked in 2020 to prepare the church to navigate through COVID-19 and other related challenges. During 2020, the FGBCFI provided training for its fellowship of churches in tools to manage disruptions in this season. As a result of this training, I prepared a PowerPoint presentation for MCCBC entitled "Navigating from the Now to the Next to the New": N^3. I shared with the context that in order to overcome the disruptions, the church had to grant permission to discover and discuss new strategies,

make the most of this time/season, ask the holy Spirit to focus us on this moment, and know that each person of the church (young and old) is critical to the success of MCCBC. I shared 1 Chronicles 12:32 in how the men of Issachar (1) assessed the times, (2) acknowledged the times, and (3) adjusted for the times. Leadership and the congregation alike needed to see that the church is going to have to set a new normal. The definition for normal and normalcy are listed as follows: normal: to go back to the former restoration of the old habits and old practices of doing church as it was Pre-COVID-19, while normalcy is the restoration of the rhythms and relationships found in gathering together as the church again. These definitions were provided in the Fellowship's training.

Disruptions are breaks or interruptions in the ordinary course of doing business. One of the fellowship's examples in dealing with disruption was focused on how Nehemiah dealt with it. After he wept for the people, he used competent and willing leaders, walked around the city to assess the situation, authored a strategy and plan for the operation to build the wall in fifty-two days, put the plan in motion, and finally, built up the excitement in the people. Accordingly, as pastor at MCCBC, I shared with the congregation that the longer it takes for the church to get into the new normalcy, the longer it will take the church to get most of the congregation to re-engage around the vision. I shared that this is a time for reset, reboot, and strategizing. The church had to consider how to integrate the plan to adjust, invest, and engage.

I shared with MCCBC how John 21 described how the disciples returned to their "normal" fishing activity immediately after the resurrection. Jesus, however, revealed

himself in His resurrection body.[29] Once Peter understood and recognized that this was Jesus speaking to them, he immediately got in the water to swim to Him. Later, Peter, who was the unofficial leader of the group of disciples, was reconciled with Jesus and given a new commission to "feed my sheep." In other words, he was to "fish" humankind for the Kingdom of God (John 21:15-17).[30] This story from John 21 indicates that the church has an opportunity to develop new strategies by staying positive and focused on the Great Commission as Jesus had given to the church (Matt. 28:16-20). The "Renew, Refresh & Ignite" and the "Now to the Next to the New" strategic planning events have helped MCCBC to be an early participant in the psychology of transitional change. As such, I believe MCCBC is somewhere in the neutral zone with realignment and repatterning taking place.[31]

Over the past year, the Spirit has led me in delivering Sunday worship messages that allow for the freedom of the move of the Spirit in the services at MCCBC. During a particular service in August 2024, the homily entitled "Whose Coat Are You Wearing?" was taken from Genesis 37:1-11. The anchor verse shares how Jacob, the father of twelve sons, gave an ornamental coat that he had made and gave it to the favored child, Joseph (Gen. 37:3). The scriptural text showed the logical progression of the enmity between the favored son and the rest of Jacob's sons.[32] This sermon was used to reveal several key points. First, it showed the congregation that Joseph had to endure hard times because of

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[29] Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 400.

[30] Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 399.

[31] Bridges, *Managing Transitions*, 5.

[32] Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2005), 676-682.

his arrogance in acknowledging the favor (anointing) on his life. Another point from the story was how Joseph's journey, in God's timing, allowed his cup to overflow in front of his enemies (Ps. 23:5) with blessings and benefits. God had transformed Joseph through his journey in such a way that he blessed his family and enemies who were faced with severe drought conditions. This transformational sermon allowed MCCBC to see and experience the flow of the Spirit during a service in the context.

On this August day, the church began to "taste and see that the Lord is good," as many congregants started to shout with exuberance while standing on their feet and openly praising the Lord (Ps. 34:8a). This move of the Spirit upon the context was an experience that I had not previously seen or experienced in such a collective manner at MCCBC. This was a transformational move of the Spirit upon the context. The story of Jacob and his sons allowed the people at MCCBC to get a metaphoric taste of the apple. Was the apple sweet, or was it bitter? On this day, the apple was sweet to many in attendance. Attending this service were a mother and daughter who were from another city, about ninety miles from Columbus. Both of these individuals have been watching MCCBC services on Facebook Live. At the end of the service, the daughter presented a five-figure check to the church in support of the 100th church anniversary. They are both members of a Catholic church. The congregation shouted loudly and strongly for about fifteen minutes. The people did not leave the church for about an hour after the service ended.

Another paradigm shift in worship occurred during a Columbus District FGBCFI evening service in October 2024. The service was held at one of the district member churches, where several MCCBC members were present. The service began at 6:30 pm

with intercessory prayer; the praise and worship portion of the service started at 7:00 pm. As the district overseer, I asked all of the senior pastors, district officers, and ministers to join in the intercessory prayer time rather than engaging in the traditional ceremonious processional of the bishops and other officers of the district; they became engaged in the intercessory, praise, and worship, and prayers. The service exploded with high praise and experienced the outpouring of the Spirit from the beginning of the intercessory period to the end of the service.

The guest speaker delivered a powerful and decisive word for that evening, "Go Deeper," using the text Luke 5:1-11. She shared how the people of God need to "look beyond where we stand in this season." The speaker further shared that the church needs to "look in the spiritual and not the natural" as we listen, respond, and obey the Word as Peter did when he said, ". . . nevertheless, at thy Word" (Luke 5:5). This was a strong message for the people of God in this season. At the altar call, the altar was overflowing with persons who desired prayer. This was another example of the transformational move of the Spirit upon the people of God when the removal of the systematic strongholds allowed people to experience and witness the fall of the Spirit on people's lives. Due to his witnessing the spiritually inspiring service, the visiting bishop asked me if I could be tied to the communications and participate in the Project for MCCBC. The bishop also permitted me to engage members of the Columbus district as reasonably possible.

The Spirit placed a word of caution in my heart to avoid choking the people with more substantial meals (1 Pet. 2:2-3). It was wonderful to see the people taste the sweetness of God, but the revelation to me was to proceed with caution with future metaphoric dietary meals. In other words, the training sessions should not be designed to

overwhelm the participants because the meals could be bitter to them. The text in 1 Peter 2 does not mean that the people need elementary teaching; however, it requires me as the pastor to preach and teach the unadulterated, uncut, and uncompromised form of God's word. Contaminated words can lead to sickness and even possibly death.[33]

Conclusion

I am equipped to lead the context from traditional forms of worship to the normalcy of a spirit-filled worship experience whereby corporate worship ushers in the power of the Holy Spirit. This project will examine transformation methods to uncover practices and means for developing a transformative church model in contemporary society. I have personally experienced revival and revitalization in my spiritual journey.

My leadership skills and spiritual autobiography journey will allow me to be used as a conduit for the "outpouring of the Holy Spirit" (Joel 2:28-29) to flow upon the context and let the Holy Spirit lead, guide, direct, and influence the project's ultimate success. The strategic initiative for the doctoral project in this context is to connect the church's hearts to the Trinitarian God more intentionally. If the church's leadership and clergy were trained and educated on church renewal and revitalization concepts, then the context would be more relevant to recognizing and participating in the Holy Spirit's move in the *Missio Dei*. The leadership team's development will allow the congregation to engage in its ecclesiastical authority to fight against the little "Baals" and demonic powers.

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[33] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, Volume 37* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers Group, 2003), 77-78.

I will focus on implementing spiritual discipline training in prayer for the "chief worshippers," which includes the clergy, evangelists, deacons, and other church leaders. Volunteerism will also be extended to the congregation. In particular, I believe that the congregation must see the tiers of leadership openly praising God's magnificence.

While pastoring, my past life has periodically confronted me because previous acquaintances recognized me as a man who had been "ruined" and had "unclean lips" and "lived among people with unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). I had been "locked in my sinful past" due to various indiscretions and past church dogmas that hindered me from servitude opportunities. These roadblocks have been overcome by the renewing presence of the Holy Spirit through the "sudden, overwhelming experience of God's grace." I experienced the "wave of liquid love" similar to Charles Grandison Finney's (1792-1875 AD) experience. I have been inspired to overcome the "Spiritual Apartheid" roadblock that restricted my desires of spiritual gifts, such as praying in a heavenly language, casting out demonic powers, laying on of hands, operating in the Spirit, and including women in the ministry.[34]

The following Chapter 6 covers the Project Analysis. The analysis details the results based on qualitative data collected over seven sessions through face-to-face contact and virtual presentations with participants. All training sessions were planned at MCCBC and will include onsite and virtual presentations. I served as the primary investigator.

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[34] Morton, *Changing Forward*, 83.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

This project training symposium included seven sessions for volunteers who enrolled and participated. I led all volunteer recruitment efforts and served as the sole project investigator. I ensured compliance with the principles essential to ethical research involving human subjects, as established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. I delegated a Professional Associate (PA) to oversee this activity and verify compliance. Volunteers were recruited through the church's worship service announcements, websites, flyers (see Appendix A), emails, and pre-recorded phone calls.

The project was conducted through face-to-face contact and virtual presentations with volunteer participants. The data collection was based on qualitative research using various techniques, including pre-project and post-project questionnaires (see Appendix J), journaling assignments (see Appendix D), and interviews. I focused on implementing a symposium of several learning objectives, including spiritual disciplines, intercessory prayer, and skills for managing change. These learning opportunities allowed the project enrollees to experience a conative shift toward greater openness in praising God's magnificence. At the end of the seven sessions, the project culminated with a post-project questionnaire that showed that the project volunteers supported the hypothesis: "if ministry leaders participate in a focused educational symposium about the charismata and

the roles it plays in the local church, then they will be equipped to educate the membership about the Holy Spirit's presence and involvement in ministry."

Although the solicitation was directed at the congregation, most of the volunteers were expected to come from the existing leadership team, which included nineteen members: six clergy (also called elders), six diaconate ministry members, three trustees, two church mothers, one church historian, and one church administrator. The targeted number of project volunteer enrollees ranged from seven to fifteen, but I aimed to reach at least ten. The total number of interested persons exceeded my expectations. A total of thirty-nine individuals expressed interest in participating, including six non-MCCBC members. After meeting and interviewing all interested persons, I enrolled ten individuals who signed an informed consent form (see Appendix B) before beginning the project. The enrollees included eight church members, comprising five clergy, two diaconate members, and one other church leader. The remaining two enrollees were non-MCCBC members, with one tied to the Fellowship. However, one volunteer had to withdraw after the first session due to a medical emergency, leaving nine participants. All sessions were recorded and attended both in-person and virtually at MCCBC.

I directed the implementation of the forum to achieve several learning objectives, including teaching from the foundational chapters (biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary), spiritual disciplines from the Baptist Articles of Faith and the Full Gospel Baptist Distinctives, intercessory prayer, and skills to manage change. In addition to these training elements, I chose practical theology as the overarching framework for aligning charismatic theologies, which provided a more life-application approach to religious living that the context can embrace. For the interdisciplinary foundation, I chose

transformation theories that intertwine with church renewal and organizational change theories.

I selected four Professional Associates (PAs) who met UTS's criteria of holding doctoral degrees. I met each PA and asked them to pray for the project's success. The PAs recognized that the paradigm shift implicit in the project could be challenging for some, especially regarding their understanding (or lack thereof) of the Spirit's power and impact on people who may not have experienced the outpouring of the Spirit.

The Spirit gave me a word of caution to "avoid choking" the volunteer participants with more than substantial meals (1 Pet. 2:2-3). In other words, training sessions should not be designed to overwhelm participants because the material could be "bitter" to them. The text in 1 Peter 2 does not mean that people need elementary teaching; however, it requires me to preach and teach the unadulterated, uncut, and uncompromised form of God's word. Still, I am mindful not to "serve" contaminated words that could lead to sickness and possibly even death.[1]

The PAs helped me with the overall structure of the project, including recommendations on essential resources, constructive criticism, review of the questionnaire design, and ensuring fair treatment and integrity for each participant. Additional responsibilities included project logistics, including overseeing the dissemination, collection, and distribution of questionnaires, as well as handling other sensitive materials. One of the professional associates was asked to serve on the final project examination committee.

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[1] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, Volume 37* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers Group, 2003), 77-78.

In my initial project draft, I proposed that the seven-session symposium would conclude with a revival-style worship service, expecting God's divine work in the lives of His people. However, further discussions with one of the PAs suggested that I should move the revival to an earlier session. The reason is that although I, as the pastor, have a vision for the hearts, minds, and souls of the congregation, I might not fully understand the conative effects being placed on them. A good way to introduce a new idea is through a "soft introduction," as I experienced during one of my doctoral intensives. During that particular intensive, I shared how I was overwhelmed by God's presence, along with more than 250 other attendees. The praise and worship time was filled with music that created a powerful atmosphere. One of the contemporary worship songs that touched me was titled "Goodness of God," which was originally sung by Jenn Johnson.[2] This non-threatening service style could help with the formulation: exposure + experimentation = experience. Accordingly, I moved this service to Session Two and called it the "Transformative Spiritual Worship Service," based on Romans 12:1-2.

The worship service offered the project participants and attendees a well-received spiritual worship experience. The group's discussions enhanced their awareness of the physical sensations they felt during the transformative worship. Further evidence of this was seen in their responses to questionnaires and in the strong spiritual presence observed during Session 3, as detailed in the "Summary of Learning" section.

A summary of the conative change among the project's participants was similar to the situation described of the people of Galatia (Gal. 3:1-3, 11-14). The Spirit worked in

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[2] "Victory," composed by Ed Cash, Ben Fielding, Jason Ingram, Brian Johnson, and Jenn Johnson (Redding, CA: Bethel Music, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0FBb6hnwTo.

the people's faith, not through their efforts. Referencing the pericope for this project, Elijah poured water on the altar, seemingly making it more difficult for the offering to catch fire (1 Kings 18:33-39). In other words, the conative change in the enrollees during the training appeared to help them find a place where the "fire" (the Spirit) could fall upon their hearts. I believed that this movement of the Spirit, especially experienced in Session Two and Session Three, should help the leadership team to guide the congregation towards a more receptive attitude towards the movement of the Spirit, and less questioning of the charismatic manifestation of God's power upon them.

Historically, MCCBC, a predominantly Black Baptist Church, practiced a traditional style of worship. The section on the contextual literary analysis in Chapter 2, on the Biblical Foundations, explored why the Children of Israel faced confrontation on Mount Carmel. The pericope focused on 1 Kings 18:16-39. The key lesson of this encounter at Mount Carmel was to bring God's people back to the place where they first received the Lord: in their hearts, in their living, and as role models for their community and nations. There is a parallel between the challenge at Mount Carmel and the issues MCCBC faces today, such as superficial worship and the worship of "Baals."

I believe that through the training symposium, participants began to dismantle systemic strongholds so that the congregation's paradigms of worship and practice can shift to reflect their daily lives. I align my thoughts with Ray Anderson, who said that the "God who accompanied the people on their journey through the wilderness (the Children

of Israel) walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden" is the same God who will actively work in the lives of the people at MCCBC.[3]

The church's focus should be on genuine worship led, guided, and directed by the Holy Spirit that honors the one true God. The congregation needs a transformative shift from traditional worship to a more charismatic style. If the church's leadership and laity are trained and educated on church renewal and revitalization, then the church would be better equipped to recognize the move of the Holy Spirit. Church renewal offers hope for revitalizing churches like MCCBC when God's people fall into a state of unfaithfulness.[4]

Methodology

The problem at MCCBC was identified as the church was led by certain ministry leaders and members who actively resist acknowledging and following the Holy Spirit's charismatic lead regarding church operations and congregational worship. The hypothesis I used for the project is as follows: if ministry leaders participate in a focused educational symposium about charismata and the roles it plays in the local church, then they will be equipped to educate the membership about the Holy Spirit's presence and involvement in ministry. I believe that the training symposium provided a basic level of training aimed at fostering a stronger, more dynamic relationship between leadership and ministry directors with the Spirit. The data collection was based on qualitative research using various techniques, including pre-project and post-project questionnaires, journaling assignments,

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[3] Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 11.

[4] Howard A. Snyder, *Signs of the Spirit: How God Reshapes the Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 42.

and one-on-one interviews. The focus of the seminar was determined after much prayer and fasting.

I choose to track the changes in the participants by focusing on their conative transformation, which reflects their differences in action. Initially, I considered tracking their cognitive (thinking processes) and affective (feelings, attitudes, and emotions) shifts at the start of the project planning. However, it was more relevant to measure their conative changes in the participants' will, motivation, intentions, and actions.[5] The significant conative changes I observed included a shift in attitude toward their understanding and acceptance that there is no life or worship within the local church without the presence of the Holy Spirit. A second indicator, following participation in my project, was that the participants learned the Holy Spirit is the connecting bridge between God our Father and the building and sustaining of their faith. The third and final indicator was their realization that the Holy Spirit empowers the local church to engage with and edify the surrounding community. Although thinking, feeling, and acting are distinct aspects of the human mind, they are closely interconnected.

I developed a seven-session training symposium on spiritual disciplines and influences for the context's leadership team and key members of the congregation. An important aspect of the project was its significance to me as a district overseer for the FGBCFI, where I support several churches, partners, and individuals affiliated with the Fellowship. I believe many members and attendees of the Fellowship's conferences and services did not fully understand why they participated in its activities beyond their love

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[5] Richard E. Snow and Marshall J. Farr, eds., *Aptitude, Learning, and Instruction. Volume 3, Conative and Affective Process Analyses* (London, UK: Routledge, 2023), 1-2.

for the music, worship, and fellowship (i.e., *koinonia*). As a result, I opened the recruitment for volunteers to FGBCFI's district members and others interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the charismatic way the Holy Spirit operates within a spiritual setting. The data collection methods used in this project provided enrollees with opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual growth.

The symposium was held from July 19, 2025, to August 9, 2025, which took place on Saturdays and Sundays during this period. All training sessions were held at MCCBC via in-person and virtually for recording purposes. I also had six make-up sessions for individuals with scheduling conflicts. These sessions were conducted both in-person and virtually. All make-up sessions were completed within the approved timeframe.

I was responsible for all volunteer solicitation and the selection process, ensuring complicity with the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects. As a result, I excluded vulnerable populations who were protected by federal standards and guidelines from the project, including pregnant women, minors, prisoners, cognitively impaired individuals, and other groups such as active military personnel, trauma and abuse survivors, and grieving individuals. While there is no foolproof way to determine whether participants belonged to protected classes, I conducted interviews with all potential participants before they were permitted to participate in the project, and each volunteer was required to sign a consent form. Volunteers were solicited through various sources, including church worship service announcements, church and FGBCFI district websites, flyers, emails, and in-person meetings.

The targeted enrollment goal for the project was between seven and fifteen participants. I assumed interest and responses from potential volunteers would be minimal, given the church's size and the project's nature; however, interest exceeded my expectations. A total of thirty-eight individuals expressed interest in participating in the project, including five from non-MCCBC members: three FGBCFI district members, one Pentecostal, and one Catholic.

I intentionally did not discourage any of the interested parties, aside from excluding those who were considered part of a federally protected class. However, I expressed the type of commitment involved in the introductory meetings and interviews, including, but not limited to, attending each session, completing questionnaires, participating in discussions, and keeping a journal entry for each session. Several individuals elected not to participate in the project after learning about the type of accountability and responsibility involved. Some attendees eliminated themselves due to their ties to a protected class and for medical reasons. After meeting and interviewing the remaining interested parties, I enrolled ten individuals. Each of them signed consent forms. All showed excitement and wanted to participate. However, one individual had to withdraw after the second session due to a medical emergency, leaving nine actual participants.

The project was conducted through face-to-face interactions and virtual presentations. Data collection employed qualitative research methods, including pre-project and post-project questionnaires, journaling assignments, and one-on-one interviews. The pre- and post-project questionnaires contained the same ten questions, designed to measure the amount of learning that occurred after the training. Journaling

assignments were given to volunteers after each session, starting from session two through session six. The first and seventh sessions did not include journaling due to their nature: session one was an introductory session, and session seven summarized the teachings and helped in developing next steps toward establishing a “culture of honor” at MCCBC. Each volunteer received a composition book to journal additional thoughts on learning between sessions. Lastly, one-on-one interviews were conducted via virtual call with each participant after every session, except session seven.

I believe I needed to establish a more structured and formal process for conative change within the church. The learning objectives were to shift the church toward a more authentic worship that honors the Trinitarian God. I have been gradually shifting the context from a traditional worship style to a more charismatic one over the past year. So far, it has been generally well-received. The project provided a more organized learning opportunity for ministry leaders to directly experience a conative shift in their openness to praising God's magnificence as they feel the flow of the Spirit.

At the end of the seven sessions, the project culminated in the anticipated showing up of God’s divine transformation and praxis in the lives of the volunteers. I focused on implementing spiritual disciplines and influences for the key church leaders in their ministries and within the congregation, making them more relevant “chief worshippers” of the church. This was also witnessed in the two volunteers who were not members of the church but were members of the Columbus District of the FGBCFI, where I serve as the district overseer. They both have repeatedly shared that the exposure to the training has elevated them to see and better understand the charismatic lead of the Spirit in their ministries at their respective local congregations.

This training fostered participants' growth and provided a sound methodology for examining the problem and testing the hypothesis. The volunteers' responses recorded the positive changes in their understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in the church. Notably, after the completion of Session Seven, the volunteers all expressed their devotion, determination, and dedication to pursue further training to effectively serve in the work of God's kingdom.

All information gathered for the research was securely stored at the end of the training. The pre-project and post-project questionnaires, journals, and all data used in the project were stored by me in a safe location. This information was stored in a waterproof and fireproof lockbox for a period of three years. The written documents will be shredded, and all other data will be disposed of after a three-year period.

Implementation

The project implementation began after I received formal approval from the chair of the United Theological Seminary Institutional Review Board for Health Sciences Research (IRB-HSR) on April 17, 2025. The IRB-HSR reviews all research involving human subjects, including but not limited to employees and students, whether funded or unfunded. This was an essential part of consideration for my project because I wanted to exclude federally protected classes of vulnerable populations, such as pregnant women, minors, prisoners, cognitively impaired individuals, active military personnel, trauma survivors, abuse survivors, and grieving individuals. Although there is no perfect way to determine whether participants belong to a federally protected group, all potential

participants in my project were interviewed and required to sign a consent form (see Appendix B) before participating in the project.

The project involved seven volunteer training sessions, and I managed all recruitment efforts. Volunteers were recruited through various channels, such as church worship service announcements, MCCBC and the FGBCFI district websites, flyers (see Appendix B), emails, and in-person outreach. All interested individuals received a letter addressed to the "Potential Volunteer" with my name and purpose of the project, including the problem statement, hypothesis, timeframe, project site, and a virtual link (see Appendix C).

I chose five church members to serve as contextual associates (CAs) to assist with planning and executing the final project. The CAs included a trustee, a deacon, the first lady, and two lay members. None of the CAs are volunteers for the training symposium. The CAs helped identify accommodations and the related needs. Because of their connection to the final project, I shared the core of my spiritual journey through personal testimonies and readings. The CAs also managed various amenities to meet volunteers' needs during the training sessions, such as ensuring proper equipment was available, ordering lunch, refreshments, and snacks, attending to restroom needs, and performing other similar tasks. They also distributed notebooks and handouts, and collected the pre-project and post-project questionnaires, end-of-session journals, and the composition books at the end of Session Seven. All collected materials were placed in a box with a slit on top, preventing anyone from seeing the unique identifiers (V01, V02, etc.), which were used instead of names during data collection and analysis. Finally, the deacon was selected to participate in the final examination committee.

The first recruitment meeting was held on Monday, May 19, 2025, and was virtual-only, with six attendees. This experience revealed to me that virtual-only meetings limited some members' attendance due to various logistical issues, like limited access to virtual platforms and unfamiliarity with online connections. As a result, all subsequent meetings (six total) were conducted as hybrid virtual and in-person recruitment sessions.

I held a separate information meeting with the congregation after a Sunday morning service, about a month before the project began. This meeting was called to address "some smoke" that was starting to rise. One of the elders shared with me that questions and concerns were being raised about whether I was trying to turn the church into a "tongue-speaking" environment. These concerns seemed to be isolated from members of the leadership team. Another individual also cited that additional comments were raised by one of my family members, but no name was disclosed to me. The meeting was conducted more like a casual "coffee talk" where I gave the attendees a chance to share their worries. I explained that I was planning a more formal training symposium on accepting and understanding the Holy Spirit's role in worship, preaching, and church ministry. This seemed to calm most of the open concerns, though I understood some level of apprehension still lingered. Twenty people attended in person, and another seven joined virtually.

Four Professional Associates (PAs) were asked and agreed to provide advice and guidance throughout the project's development phases. All the associates hold doctoral degrees; two are senior pastors (one with over thirty-nine years of experience), one is a co-pastor, and the remaining associate has over thirty years of experience in pastoring and church planting. These associates brought a wide range of experiences and

qualifications necessary to understand and grasp the project's problem statement and hypothesis. The PAs assisted me with the overall structure of the project, including suggestions for essential resources, constructive criticism of the training, review of the questionnaire design, and assurance that I incorporate fair treatment and integrity of the participants. I also asked each associate to pray for the project's success.

These PAs are familiar with the MCCBC and FGBCFI's leadership and organizational structures. One of the PAs has been a member of FGBCFI for over fifteen years, while another associate has attended and observed training and worship services at FGBCFI conferences. I have met with these associates over twenty times in various settings, including group meetings, one-on-one meetings (by phone and in-person), virtual meetings, and meals. The associates have signed and submitted professional associate certification forms. I also periodically provide a one-page "Schedule of Assignments, Timelines, and Due Dates" sheet so the PAs have a "quick" view of my status in between contacts.

As I prepared for the training, I was advised by an IRB-HSR advisor to consider any risks to volunteers due to the project's nature. I recognized that the paradigm shift implicit in the project might be challenging for some individuals, especially regarding their understanding of the power and impact of the Spirit on those who might not have experienced the outpouring of the Spirit.

Accordingly, I included mitigation strategies to address potential risks. These risks included, but were not limited to, emotional discomfort, privacy concerns, unintended effects on family matters, and challenges to established group norms. These risks might trigger emotions like guilt, stress, and anxiety. To address these concerns, I

assigned a Professional Associate (PA) to serve as a "pastoral care provider" during the training sessions. I also tasked this PA with ensuring I adhered to principles crucial for the ethical treatment of human subjects. Additionally, I asked a licensed social worker with supervisory credentials and over thirty years of experience to be available at each session to help manage any triggers.

Regarding privacy and confidentiality concerns, I informed the volunteers during the introductory session (Session One) that all research data would be anonymized and used solely for research purposes. I employed ten unique identifiers, V01 (indicating "Volunteer 01"), V02, V03, V04, V05, V06, V07, V08, V10, and V11, rather than the volunteers' names, for all data collection and analysis. One of the CAs created the identifiers but inadvertently did not consider V09 in the sequence. After Session One began, two additional congregants expressed interest in joining the project after hearing about the excitement during a Wednesday night prayer meeting. Additionally, their enrollment was timely in replacing participant V08, who had to excuse themselves due to hospitalization. The new enrollees attended makeup sessions. I also informed the group that I would uphold the highest integrity, within reason, during discussions, that the group would respect each other's privacy, avoiding the sharing of any identifying details outside of the project environment.

I reviewed group norms during the five-minute welcome at the beginning of each session, except for Session Two (Charismatic worship service). I did this to set a tone for a productive and respectful interaction. All participants were encouraged to verbally agree to the norms at the start of each session. This reinforcement of norms helped to foster a positive and supportive group environment. I designed the project to promote

discussion about faith and spiritual beliefs. However, I told the group that I would offer resources or referrals for family counseling if needed. I encouraged open-ended, non-directive discussion prompts to allow for diverse perspectives to be shared.

The project training was held at MCCBC, where I utilized the fellowship hall, which had tables for adequate spacing between participants and comfortable, padded chairs. The room was suitable for the project, as it could accommodate more than 125 persons for dining and gatherings. A wall-mounted 65-inch TV/monitor displayed the PowerPoint presentation (PPT) for the participants to follow along in their notebooks.

I prepared and distributed a notebook to each volunteer for use during the sessions and as a permanent reference. Each one-inch binder included dividers for each of the seven sessions, a copy of the fifty-five PowerPoint slides (three slides per page with lines for note-taking), various teaching handouts, and a two-page "Journaling Tips" document (see Appendix D). The breakdown of the slide presentation (see Appendix E) for each session is listed below:

> Session One consisted of eighteen slides: #1 to #18, Introductory & Chapter 1.
> Session Two consisted of two slides: #19 and #20, Charismatic Church Service.
> Session Three consisted of twelve slides: #21 to #32, Biblical Foundations.
> Session Four consisted of six slides: #33 to #38, Historical Foundations.
> Session Five consisted of five slides: #39 to #43, Theological Foundations.
> Session Six consisted of nine slides: #44 to #52, Interdisciplinary Foundations.
> Session Seven consisted of two slides: #53 and #55, Culture and Ongoing Praxis.

The tips offered practical guidance to help participants record their experiences during the training. The advice included, but was not limited to, identifying areas for growth, finding a consistent time for journaling, acknowledging doubts and uncertainties, recording thoughts and internal conversations, and recalling specific moments when the Holy Spirit engaged with them through its presence, guidance, and influence on their

lives. I told the volunteers that their contributions to this research project were invaluable, encouraging them to journal mindfully and with as much detail as possible. I explained that their responses provided rich data to help me, as the primary project investigator, understand the many ways the Holy Spirit interacts with them. The important dates for the seven sessions were from July 19, 2025, through August 9, 2025 (see Appendix F). Additionally, a project calendar outlined the activities for each session (see Appendix G).

I began Session One with a welcome, a collection of the remaining executed consent forms, and a review of group norms. The volunteers then completed the pre-project questionnaire. An overview of each of the professional associates and supporting staff (contextual associates, social worker, and senior pastor), the project topic, problem statement, hypothesis, pericope, key biblical and historical figures, and the symposium's goals. This session included the review of the principal project investigator's rights and responsibilities and each participant's roles. I summarized the teaching topics based on the research findings to effectively implement the hypothesis using the four foundational chapters: biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary. I explained the purpose of notebook journals to participants and reviewed the agenda for future sessions.

Session Two featured the worship service (see Appendix H). I invited the emeritus Bishop Duane C. Tisdale of the FGBCFI for Ohio to deliver the sermon. He also holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Ashland Theological Seminary. Although I had inadvertently failed to include him in the "Speaker Information" section of the approved IRB-HSR, I was informed by the program director that it was okay to continue moving forward, since the project implementation had been completed. I met with him in April

2025 to explain the purpose of the service, including my project topic, problem statement, and hypothesis. I asked him to consider the topic of "Transformative Spiritual Worship" based on Romans 12:1-2. He graciously accepted the assignment. The bishop's praise leader and musician came with him from his Toledo, Ohio, church to introduce (or, for some, reintroduce) a charismata worship service, focusing on a Full Gospel Baptist Church-style worship experience.

My goal was to provide a "soft introduction" to the kind of service I experienced at an FGBCFI-style gathering. I wanted to observe how volunteers from the project, church members, and others would experience the Spirit during a service led by one of my spiritual mentors. I believed this would help me evaluate conative change attitudes through the formula: exposure + experimentation = experience.

The Bishop's sermon explained that "just being saved" is not enough. Being "just saved" means you are not fully aware; you are simply reacting with emotions. He emphasized the need for listeners to move to a closer relationship with God, which is why we "need to be more than saved." He referred to Romans 12:1, which says we are to "present your bodies a living sacrifice . . .which is your reasonable service." The bishop shared the following example to clarify his point:

> Being just saved is like being in a car wreck. You are injured and hurt and taken in an ambulance, but you are never taken to the hospital, where healing and restoration happen. Just being saved gets us to the hospital, but not inside it. We need to be transformed (and restored), which only occurs when admitted to the hospital.[6]

[6] Duane C. Tisdale, Sermon, "Transformative Spiritual Worship," based on Romans 12:1-2, Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church, Columbus, OH: July 20, 2025.

The bishop also explained the difference between surrender and submission. He stated that "surrender" is a negotiation, while "submission" is a full choice.[7] Transformative worship involves submitting to God's will. We need Christ-like character in our hearts, minds, souls, and strength; this consists of a change in behavior and attitude (conative).

The core of the bishop's message is that we must accept the call to present ourselves as a living sacrifice that reflects God's character. The theologian Leon Morris emphasizes that to gain new life, we must fully yield our bodies like the first-century believers, who were more familiar with offering proper "sacrifices" than people today.[8] Simply being saved does not clarify the difference between surrender and submission. At the end of his sermon, the bishop quoted the first verse and chorus of the song, "In the Garden." The song puzzled me, so I looked up its meaning.

Charles Austin Miles (1868-1946 AD) is credited as the songwriter by an article written by Chris Fenner.[9] Miles was originally a pharmacist but switched to music publishing in 1898. His song was inspired by his vivid reading of John 20 about Jesus and Mary Magdalene. He envisioned himself witnessing Mary's encounter with Jesus at the tomb. The message in Miles' songwriting was the transformative power overcoming Mary and other witnesses of the empty tomb: this is the "initial opening" of their eventual understanding of the power of the resurrection of Jesus.[10]

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[7] Tisdale, "Transformative Spiritual Worship."

[8] Leon L. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Willaim B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 433-434.

[9] Chris Fenner, "In the Garden," Hymnology Archive, Published 09/18/2019, https://www.hymnology archive.com/in-the-garden.

[10] Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Willaim B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 632-633.

I found the bishop's illustration vividly shows how we can overlook the opportunity for transformation of our minds, hearts, souls, and strength if we do not honestly present who we really are to God, even though God is all-knowing. Our worship is not how loud we are but how genuinely we approach God's throne. The relationship we seek with the Triune God is deeply personal. God understands our unspoken words, so we simply need to know Him beyond our titles and roles. The hymn the bishop referenced in his sermon is a transformative worship song, where "I come in the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses; and the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses."[11]

Session Three introduced teaching on Biblical Foundations based on the pericope from 1 Kings 18:16-39. I shared how this project has been part of my spiritual journey and how it connects to the encounter that transformed the people of Israel on Mount Carmel. After my spiritual transformation, my journey helped me develop a schematic of "prayer circuits" in my heart and connect the congregation to the DNA of the Trinitarian God. The training included lessons on the parallels between the challenges at Mount Carmel and the modern issues related to superficial worship. I also taught about the key characters of the mountaintop encounter: Elijah, Ahab, Jezebel, and the local gods. Additionally, I addressed some of the "Baals" of today, such as disinformation and misinformation on social media platforms, along with other concerns like false prophecies that can undermine the church's authority.

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[11] Charles Austin Miles, "*In The Garden"* (No. 109) in *The New National Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: National Baptist Publishing Board, 1977), 109.

Implementing a more meaningful prayer circuit among the congregants helps the church to exercise its ecclesiastical authority to confront demonic powers. These efforts aim to restore a sense of normalcy that revitalizes rhythms and relationships from the past, while moving away from the old habits and practices of doing church. These steps are being developed without intending to compromise the church's mission of bringing reconciliation and salvation to the unchurched, unsaved, lost souls, and disenfranchised individuals.

Session Four provided lessons on the Historical Foundations. The focus was on the spiritual transformative awakening of leaders and laity during the Evangelical Revival, the Great Awakenings, and the importance of my primary historical figure, Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875 AD). I taught how Finney was considered one of the most influential revivalists of the nineteenth century and a vital leader of the Second Great Awakening.[12] The lesson discussed the religious landscape in the late 1700s and 1800s, the effects of the Awakenings on America's revitalization, and a brief discussion on the rise of rationalism and the growth of revivals throughout America.

I explained how Finney was a small-town attorney in upstate New York who became a leading revivalist. Finney's journey to ministry was considered unusual because he rose quickly from being a novice to a key leader in the Presbyterian church.[13] However, in 1821, he experienced a profound conversion in his law office, which he described as "a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit" when it descended on him "in waves

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[12] Frances FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 37.

[13] FitzGerald, *The Evangelicals*, 38.

and waves of liquid love."[14] His significant contributions occurred during the Rochester Revival in 1830, leading to many conversions, the introduction of emotional prayer groups and the "anxious bench" for seekers, and a transformation of traditional worship into a charismatic, spirit-led experience. Finney also promoted social aid for all people.

I also discussed additional secondary leaders and movements that were relevant to the project. William Joseph Seymour (1870-1922 AD), a Black Holiness preacher, is recognized as the leader of the Azusa Street Revival. The Azusa movement was considered revolutionary because, among other things, it allowed the marginalized and the disposed to seek God regardless of race, gender, or class. He was also credited with Pentecostalism's global outreach.[15]

I also shared about Charles Mason (1866-1961 AD), a former Black Baptist minister who helped found COGIC. Mason was the son of formerly enslaved people in Bartlett, Tennessee.[16] Mason met Charles Price Jones (1865-1949 AD), another Baptist minister who was also seeking the holiness doctrine. They traveled together to Lexington, Michigan, to encounter the holiness doctrine of entire sanctification.[17] They both accepted and preached the doctrine at Baptist churches in Arkansas. However, they were

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[14] Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism,* Second Edition (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 28.

[15] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 45.

[16] Encyclopedia of Arkansas, Charles Harrison Mason. April 24, 2024, 1, https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entroes/charles-harrison-mason-1866-1961-4003/.

[17] Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 70.

soon ejected from the Baptist association for preaching and claiming to have received the experience.[18]

Mason and Jones organized a holiness revival in February 1897 in Lexington, Michigan, which became an organizational meeting for COGIC. Mason, who was the more dominant personality, incorporated and chartered COGIC in Memphis, Tennessee, in late 1897.[19] The church was the first Southern holiness denomination to become legally chartered. As a result, many white ministers of independent holiness congregations received their ordination from Mason, making COGIC an interracial organization.[20] However, the interracial characteristics of the church began to wane due to Jim Crow restrictions in southern states. Additionally, Mason and Jones began to have differing views. Jones later founded the Church of Christ (Holiness) USA.

The training for Session Five provided an overview of theology and a brief discussion of its four main branches: biblical, systematic, historical, and practical theology. I explained that theology is essential for the church's life because it helps interpret God's narrative, the world, Israel's history, and events leading to salvation. I emphasized practical theology as the main framework for Pentecostal and Charismatic theologies for teaching within this context. The lessons included analyzing theological themes, defining key terms, examining the church's mission, discussing pastors as theologians of the local church, and exploring how theologians express the reality of God

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[18] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 70.

[19] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 71.

[20] Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition*, 71.

and His revelation to the world. I also addressed how theology critiques and examines traditions, practices, and dogmas established within the church.

During Session Five, I shared a handout containing the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian creeds to provide theologians' explanation of the relationships between God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. I shared how their relationship is one God in three persons: the same essence (Greek *homoousios*) according to the doctrine of the Trinity.[21] The Trinitarian God is the eternal being from which everything is generated. The word "Trinity" cannot be found in the Bible; however, Scripture does provide a "self-relationship of God."[22] The essential Trinity expresses that the Father is the origin of Fatherhood that constitutes the first person of God as the Father; the Son is the only eternally begotten or generated Son from the Father and that the Son was not created, but generated from the Father; and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son (the Spirit is not begotten, less there would be two sons).[23]

I shared the history of the FGBCFI. I provided a brief history of its founder, Bishop Paul S. Morton, Sr., along with the denomination's statement of affiliation with the Baptist faith. I also covered the Baptist Articles of Faith (see Appendix I) and the Full Gospel Distinctives (see Appendix K). Notably, I highlighted some of the key themes of the distinctives, such as the recognition of spiritual gifts, heavenly language, the authority to cast out demons, and other related topics, as addressed in the FGBCFI statement

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[21] Donald K. McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, Second Edition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 326.

[22] McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 326.

[23] McKim, *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 326.

regarding "The Right to Choose" to operate in the freedoms of accepting the manifestation of spiritual gifts.

In Session Six, I provided an overview of the interdisciplinary disciplines selected for this project, focusing on transformation defined as "a change in composition or structure, or a change in outward form or appearance, or a change in character or condition (convert)" according to Webster's online dictionary. The project examined data collected for this project, specifically as it relates to the church's understanding of the Holy Spirit's role. I explained that these disciplines connect the church to transformation theories and their relation to church renewal. One of the premises discussed was the definition of what makes a church good. The ideal of a "good church" is that it should be God-centered and committed to the entire gospel message of the Bible.

The symposium for this segment focused on the Hebrew word *tov*, which means "good."[24] The teaching shared how it was important for the church to be transformed into the image of God. If the church does not emulate God's character, then it can become a toxic environment. The lesson covered seven elements that foster a church free from toxicity. I also explored the psychology of change and how to manage the three phases of transition.

In the final session, the volunteers completed the post-project questionnaire. Afterwards, I summarized the lessons learned and emphasized the need for a paradigm shift in the church's cultural practices. I introduced ongoing practices from "Creating the

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[24] Scott McKnight and Laura Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020), 7.

Culture of Honor,"[25] which encourages the church to approach worship with a focus on praise. In other words, the church's "chief worshippers" (e.g., clergy, deacons, and ministry leaders) need to come to MCCBC with the right attitude for praise and worship. This attitude shift (Rom. 12:1-2) is essential for developing a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in the church and its ministries. This segment was supported by handouts containing my teaching notes on 2 Chronicles 7:11-16, which focused on the four key principles from 2 Chronicles 7:14: being humble, praying, seeking God, and avoiding sin. After a break, I handed out certificates of participation to the volunteers and the contextual associates.

Summary of Learning

The data collection methodology used in the research to test the hypothesis and evaluate the results was based on qualitative methods, including pre-project and post-project questionnaires, journaling assignments (end-of-session and composition journaling activities), and one-on-one interviews. The pre-project and post-project questionnaires showed that the training was a positive beginning, indicating a deeper level of the attendees' acceptance and understanding of the Spirit's role in church activities. The end-of-session journaling, completed after Sessions Two through Six, included insightful actions to implement in the church after the Final Project. Finally, my review of the composition books offered valuable responses. The one-on-one interviews

[25] Leon Rodgers, "Creating the Culture of Honor," unpublished, is a document that was created to aid in developing spiritual gifts that I have used previously in training sessions.

with the participants were quite engaging, as each person experienced great enthusiasm about pursuing additional training opportunities.

I observed that two attendees showed little to no emotion throughout the sessions, including during the charismatic worship service. A third person appeared to respond in the same manner until the middle of Session Three, when there was a "disturbance" in the session, which will be highlighted and explained later. Despite these noticeable situations, I found them inconsistent with journal responses. Eight of the compositions indicated they experienced a change in attitude regarding their knowledge and understanding of the Spirit's role. In fact, one journal entry collected after a session specifically shared how the person had been intentionally "silent" and understood that they needed and wanted to be more expressive. That individual shared that they had always been hesitant to talk in open forums. Notably, one person wrote nothing in their composition book, except for their identification number. In the conclusion section of this chapter, I offered comments and reflections on future training sessions for adult learners.

At Session One, the volunteers entered the training room and appeared a bit nervous and unsure of what to expect. They mingled in a friendly environment while grabbing snacks, using the bathrooms, and making small talk. The contextual associates were very warm and welcoming to all participants, inviting them to sit at the tables and chairs arranged in front of the wall-mounted 65-inch TV monitor. I displayed the project topic and the church symbol on the screen. Although I did not ask for specific demographic details such as age, gender, and education level, eight of the nine participants were classified as Baby Boomers, one as a Millennial, and two enrollees were men.

After the welcome and the completion of the pre-project questionnaire, I explained that the core of the project is to create change in church leadership, making the team more disciplined and enhancing their understanding of how to collaborate in removing barriers that prevent the congregation from actively engaging with the Trinitarian God. The church needs to participate in the theological work of the *Missio Dei*, which involves discerning, envisioning, praying, and worshiping, covering both repentance and celebration.[26] This study of God helps me and the church to express our faithful relationship with Him. Accordingly, I suggested that the church shift paradigms, explore new models of worship that are centered on inclusivity and adaptability, and take steps to dismantle strongholds while involving the congregation in the transformation process.

I shared my spiritual journey with the attendees and focused on how it aligned with MCCBC's needs. I expressed how my proven leadership skills and spiritual journey align in how God will use me as a conduit for the outpouring of His Spirit upon MCCBC. I even shared how God's providence over my life, despite painful memories, helped to shape me. I was able to survive a near-death situation (Rh factor) at birth, physical beatings and emotional abuse, isolation, and the lack of affirmation from loved ones. I told them that I am a survivor who thrives from the deep pains and sufferings, infidelity, and church hurt. Accordingly, I am equipped to help the traditional church towards a "new thing" (Isa. 43:19).

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[26] Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds. *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 16.

During the sharing of my life's journey, several individuals shed tears. Their demeanors seemed to show an element of surprise, as if to say, "No, not you, pastor. We know your family as loving, and you do not show signs of hurt." Two of the participants also risk telling a portion of their stories of abuse, mistreatment, isolation, and church hurt, essentially indicating that these situations happen in seemingly well-to-do, church-going families. I concluded this session, after preparing them for the charismatic service, explaining to the attendees that my spiritual journey and MCCBC's needs are connected.

Session Two was a blessed service, according to the attendees. All responses from the project enrollees emphasized how engaging the service was. The worship songs were lively and captivating. The teaching aspect of the preaching helped clarify how to engage in transformational worship. Attendance in person was eighty to ninety people, while another eighty people joined on Facebook Live.

The bishop was delayed by thirty minutes due to construction and weather-related traffic. As a result, the MCCBC praise team started the service before the visiting praise team arrived. The transition between the singing groups was smooth. The visiting praise team sang a couple of songs to set the atmosphere. I introduced the bishop to the congregation, and then he preached. The service concluded within the scheduled timeframe.

Most responses expressed a desire for me to replicate the teaching because they understood that transformative worship is necessary for the church to move forward. Excerpts from a few of the volunteers from their Session Two ending in-class journal entries are listed below:

- The way we think is a mess. We must understand that we don't (should not) come to church out of habit, but we must come to church looking for

transformation, so that attitudes must change. In all we do in our lives and in the church. We must rehearse down here (what we will do in) our heavenly home. (We should have) an intimate relationship with God.

- More time should be given to altar calls- for prayer, restoration, healing, and deliverance.
- Need to do a series of workshops to teach others the various elements.
- Have seasonal revivals.

During Session Three, I observed a significant shift in the attendees' attitudes reflecting their growing understanding and acceptance that there is no life or worship within the church without the presence of the Holy Spirit. It was during this session that I noticed an obvious connection with the Biblical Foundations lesson. In Session 1, most of the enrollees were not responding to many of the topics taught. However, in this session, the attendees no longer seemed to be "limping with two different opinions" (1 Kings 18:21); instead, they were actively engaged as I taught about reconciliation (restoration of a friendly relationship with God) and salvation (deliverance from the consequences of sin through the substitutionary atonement of Jesus).

During this segment, I shared about the Divine Dance of the Trinity, in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are engaged in a joyful, love-filled dance.[27] Timothy Keller described this dynamic and pulsating dance of joy and love as follows:

> Each of the divine persons centers upon the others. None demands that the others revolve around Him. Each voluntarily circles the other two, pouring love, delight, and adoration into them. Each person of the Trinity loves, adores, defers to, and rejoices in the others.[28]

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[27] Malcolm James Sawyer, *Resurrecting the Trinity: A Plea to Recover the Wonder and Meaning of the Triune God* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 155-157.

[28] Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York, NY: Penguin Random House, LLC, 2008), 222.

I challenged the volunteers to join in the dance to receive the love and joy of the trinity experience. The Trinitarian God is with us every step.

I further demonstrated the effect and impact of engaging in a dance with God by using a popular, secular line dance called the Cupid Shuffle, which is often performed at family reunions, weddings, and other gatherings. I observed everyone in the class moving in rhythmic patterns joyfully and lovingly, in sync with each other. I asked the participants, "How did the song, music make you feel?" They all started talking over each other, sharing how it made them feel happy, put a smile on their faces, made them feel warm all over, and how they wanted more. I played only about seventy-five seconds of the 3:52-minute, narrated song. After they quieted down, I asked if anyone had additional comments.

One of the volunteers, however, had a strange look on her face. So, I asked her if she had any questions or comments because I noticed she had a peculiar look, like something was about to jump out of her. Before this moment, she had not participated in any discussions, not even with the people sitting near her, except for occasional pleasantries. Additionally, I observed that she did not show any outward expressions during the Transformative Worship Service; however, her daughter was fully engaged, standing on her feet, praising God, singing songs, and smiling.

After waiting a few moments, this enrollee suddenly became very emotional and began to tear-up. There were no words or sounds, just big drops of tears falling down her face. I asked, "Why are you crying?", to which she responded, "I don't know, but I feel something." I inquired whether she had been holding back her thoughts, and she said, "Yes." She continued to be overwhelmed by the "floods and waves" of emotion, which

she described as “floods and waves of something in her gut,” moving from her waist to her upper body. She expressed that she had never felt such a strong sensation in her gut before. She also commented that she had felt unworthy to participate in this training from the beginning because of the unknown. She stated that she was Catholic, where you generally do not express emotions.

I recognized this as a “pastoral care provider” moment to offer emotional, spiritual, and practical support to this person who was feeling alone, afraid, and vulnerable, especially in the suddenness of this disclosure to the group. I immediately attended to her need and asked permission to pray for her. Immediately, several of the participants acknowledged outwardly that she had experienced a move of the Spirit. The entire volunteer group and the contextual associates surrounded her and offered a prayer of release, understanding, and favor on her life. She immediately began to cry outwardly.

After we prayed, I shared that she had experienced the unction of the Spirit upon her life as described in 1 John 2:20. She later told me after Session Three that she did not want to be a hindrance or barrier to my project. However, she had been feeling this strange presence throughout the training. She said that it hit her in her waist and moved up with an unusual feeling of joy. She apologized because she could not stop crying. I explained she experienced what Charles Grandison Finney had experienced in his law office: “the mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

The second indicator is that the participants would learn that the Holy Spirit is the connecting bridge between God our Father and the building and sustaining of their faith. This same individual said that she does not want to let go of the feeling. She wanted to continue the freedom this “joy” brought her. During that week, she connected with one of

the elders of MCCBC, who is not participating in the project, and has been in constant communication since then. She now realizes she does not feel the "connecting bridge" to God when she returns to her home church: it feels like an empty desert.

The third indicator for assessing is the participants' realization that the Holy Spirit empowers the local church to engage with and uplift the surrounding community. All participants expressed their excitement about ministering differently. One pastor who was involved in the group shared their desire to be under my guidance to unpack some of the baggage that has held them back for a very long time. They want to become more effective as pastors and serve in a new way through the manifestations they experienced in the project. The pastor shared that they could share in the "pain" of my personal spiritual journey. I helped the pastor to become more open to allowing God to access them through meditation and other manifestations of the Spirit. They also plan to seek professional counseling to help them experience freedom to serve.

The hypothesis was tested through an evaluation of qualitative methods, including pre-project and post-project questionnaires, responses to journaling questions administered at the end of each training session (except Sessions Two and Seven), responses recorded in composition books for between-session journaling (for Sessions One through Six), and one-on-one interviews I conducted with participants individually after the sessions. The pre-project questionnaire was given to each participant after their welcome to Session One of the symposia. This segment allowed participants to spend up to twenty minutes completing the questionnaire. Although I checked with each participant if additional time was needed, it was sometimes necessary. The post-project questionnaire was administered similarly in Session Seven. Composition books were

distributed to enrollees for journaling between sessions. All books were collected at the end of Session Seven. The one-on-one interviews were conducted based on the questions after each session, either in person or virtually. The following listing includes the qualitative questions and explains how each was intended to help me test and evaluate the hypothesis. Note: the final analysis comparing the pre- and post-project questionnaires is on pages 164-166 in the conclusion section. (Also see Appendix K for "Pre- and Post-Project Questionnaires' Responses and Appendix M containing "Comparison of Pre- and Post-Project Questionnaires).

Questions for Pre-project and Post-project Questionnaires (Session One and Session Seven)

1) What does "baptism in the spirit" mean to you? Explanation: This question seeks to explore the participant's understanding of the Charismatic movement.

2) What or who is the Holy Spirit and what is the purpose? Explanation: This question seeks to explore the participant's understanding of the third person of the Trinity.

3) Share your understanding of the "outpouring of the Holy Spirit." Explanation: This question seeks to gain an understanding of one's comprehension of the transformative power of the Spirit in a person's life.

4) What is your understanding and assessment of Pentecostalism? Explanation: The classic doctrine of Pentecostalism acknowledges the second work of grace, which occurs after salvation and is always followed by the person speaking in other tongues.

5) What is the difference, if any, between Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity? Explanation: Charismatic Christianity is a movement that grew out of Pentecostalism. Therefore, it shares the Pentecostal emphasis on the Holy Spirit but does not believe that Spirit baptism is a second work of grace accompanied by speaking in other tongues. Charismatics view the baptism in the Spirit as an awakening of believers to the Spirit's presence. The Spirit works in and through believers as it did in biblical times.

6) Who is Paul Sylvester Morton, and what is he known for in the Christian community? Explanation: Paul S. Morton is a gospel singer, author, pastor, and founder of the FGBCFI, a charismatic Baptist movement.

7) Describe a time when you felt the Holy Spirit in your life. Explanation: This question explores the participants' feelings, fears, concerns, and other expressions regarding the Spirit's involvement in the participant's life experiences.

8) What are your feelings when you see the pastor, church leaders, and laity express the move of the Spirit in worship? Explanation: This question seeks to observe whether the participants are excited to see the "chief worshippers" openly praising God's magnificence.

9) How do you feel when you hear people speaking in an unfamiliar language (tongues) or displaying other manifestations of the Spirit, such as laying on of hands in church? Explanation: This question aims to explore the participants' feelings, fears, concerns, and other expressions about others who may be exercising their gifts in various ways, such as speaking in unknown tongues.

10) What is the purpose of intercessory prayer in the worship service? Explanation: This question explores whether the participant understands the difference between prayer and intercessory prayer. Prayer often begins with the individual, but intercession always starts with the Holy Spirit. The intercessor prays only what the Holy Spirit prompts them to pray.

Questions for Journaling Assignments (Session Two through Session Six)

Session One – N/A

Session Two
1) What are your personal opinions and feelings about the worship service? Explanation: The church has been gradually trending toward a more spirit-filled service over the past couple of years. The senior pastor is connected to the FGBCFI, but the church is not officially affiliated as a member of the Fellowship. However, they have embraced me as their pastor, as they are beginning to allow the free flow of the spirit to enter the house. Periodically, I speak in a prayer language to God.

Session Three
1) What actions did Elijah take to help the children of Israel overcome the many "baals" in their society and change the people's attitudes to "turn their hearts back to God?" Explanation: This response should focus on how participants perceive God's desire for us to connect with the spiritual DNA of the Trinitarian God through a relevant prayer circuit. This effort aims to engage the church in seeking ecclesiastical authority to combat the "baals" in our present society, such as the disinformation and misinformation prevalent on social media platforms and news networks and other issues like false

prophecies, betrayals, mistrust, and messages that have sought to devalue the church's power.

Session Four

1) What were the "life marker moments" in Charles Finney's transformation regarding his experience with the Holy Spirit, and how do they relate to Elijah's confrontation at Mount Carmel and to us? Explanation: The historical view of Charles Finney serves as the foundational basis for this doctoral ministry project within this context. His work as a revivalist and recognized leader of the Second Great Awakening provided insights into the "awakening" experienced by the primary investigator, which will be prayerfully channeled into this context. Finney's historical journey explored the deep roots of church worship, demonstrating that, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the church expresses both its corporate and personal belief that God in Jesus Christ continues to work for good in every aspect of their lives. When the church community gathers for worship, it responds to an open invitation from God. Worship becomes a journey into God's presence, encompassing hearing the Word and sitting at the tables of expectation in celebration of Jesus Christ through our actions (e.g., Lord's Supper, baptism, etc.), after which the community is sent into the world, transformed by their encounter with God. The church is an organism, a living, breathing entity with life and sustainability through the presence of the Holy Spirit that connects us to the *perichoresis* (the Holy Dance of the Trinity).

Session Five

1. What is your perspective on *charismata* (plural form for the Greek *charisma*, "gift of grace") concerning the phrase "Baptism in the Spirit" or "filled with the Spirit"?

2. What does the phrase mean, "When people are genuinely saved, they should have an experience with the Holy Spirit?" What does it look like? Explanation: Bishop Paul Morton shared that the Baptist faith has encountered spiritual apartheid. We have the right to be born again. However, spiritual gifts, heavenly language, the power to cast out demons, laying on of hands, and women in ministry have been granted to others in the body of Christ but denied to Baptists due to traditions. Bishop Morton emphasizes that the FGBCFI is Baptist and has remained so because of its solid foundation in Jesus Christ. The Full Gospel Baptist utilizes the full anointing of the Word, and God's Word declares that we can utilize the manifestations of spiritual gifts in the name of Jesus Christ. Bishop Morton remarked, "We have the right to choose" (Mark 16:17-18).

Session Six

1) What psychological change will you experience if you experience the charismatic flow of the Holy Spirit in your worship? What does it look like?

Explanation: When people face change, it is not the change that affects them; it is the transition required for that change. Change is situational, while transition is a psychological element. It is a process that people undergo as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about. When change

occurs without people undergoing a transition, it is merely a “rearrangement of the chairs, " according to Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change by William Bridges. He stresses that people must go through three phases: The New Beginning Zone, The Neutral Zone, and The Ending, Losing, Letting Go Zone.

Session Seven – N/A

Questions for Journaling Assignments and One-on-One Interviews (Session Two through Session Six)

Session One – N/A

Session Two

1) What are your thoughts and feelings about the worship service?
2) What action would you replicate or modify to ensure they are easily implementable during and after the Final Project, considering the actions relevant to your ministry context?

Explanation: The church has been gradually moving toward a more spirit-filled service over the past couple of years. The senior pastor is connected to the FGBCFI, but the church is not officially affiliated as a member of the Fellowship. However, they have embraced me as their pastor, as they are beginning to allow the free flow of the spirit to enter the sanctuary. Periodically, I communicate with God in a prayer language.

Session Three

1) What actions did Elijah take to help the Children of Israel overcome the many “baals” in their society and change the people’s attitudes to “turn their hearts back to God?”
2) What action would you replicate or modify to ensure they are easily implementable during and after the Final Project, considering the actions relevant to your ministry context?

Explanation: This response should focus on how participants perceive God's desire for us to connect with the spiritual DNA of the Trinitarian God through a relevant prayer circuit. This effort aims to engage the church in seeking ecclesiastical authority to combat the “Baals” in our present society, such as the disinformation and misinformation prevalent on social media platforms and news networks and other issues like false prophecies, betrayals, mistrust, and messages that have sought to devalue the church’s power.

Session Four

1) What were the “life marker moments” in Charles Finney’s transformation regarding his experience with the Holy Spirit, and how do they relate to Elijah’s confrontation at Mount Carmel and to us?
2) What action would you replicate or modify to ensure they are easily implementable during and after the Final Project, considering the actions relevant to your ministry

context?

Explanation: The historical view of Charles Finney serves as the foundational basis for this doctoral ministry project within this context. His work as a revivalist and recognized leader of the Second Great Awakening provided insights into the "awakening" experienced by the primary investigator, which will be prayerfully channeled into this context. Finney's historical journey explored the deep roots of church worship, demonstrating that, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the church expresses both its corporate and personal belief that God in Jesus Christ continues to work for good in every aspect of their lives. When the church community gathers for worship, it responds to an open invitation from God. Worship becomes a journey into God's presence, encompassing hearing the Word and sitting at the tables of expectation in celebration of Jesus Christ through our actions (e.g., Lord's Supper, baptism, etc.), after which the community is sent into the world, transformed by their encounter with God. The church is an organism, a living, breathing entity with life and sustainability through the presence of the Holy Spirit that connects us to the perichoresis (the Holy Dance of the Trinity).

Session Five

1) What is your perspective on charismata (plural form for the Greek charisma, "gift of grace") concerning the phrase "Baptism in the Spirit" or "filled with the Spirit"?
2) What does the phrase mean, "When people are genuinely saved, they should have an experience with the Holy Spirit?" What does it look like?

3) What action would you replicate or modify to ensure they are easily implementable during and after the Final Project, considering the actions relevant to your ministry context?

Explanation: Bishop Paul Morton shared that the Baptist faith has encountered spiritual apartheid. We have the right to be born again. However, spiritual gifts, heavenly language, the power to cast out demons, laying on of hands, and women in ministry have been granted to others in the body of Christ but denied to Baptists due to traditions. Bishop Morton emphasizes that the FGBCFI is Baptist and has remained so because of its solid foundation in Jesus Christ. The Full Gospel Baptist utilizes the full anointing of the Word, and God's Word declares that we can utilize the manifestations of spiritual gifts in the name of Jesus Christ. Bishop Morton remarked, "We have the right to choose." (Mark 16:17-18).

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come to terms with the details of the new situation brought about by the change. When change occurs without individuals experiencing a transition, it is merely a "rearrangement of the chairs," according to the book *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, written by William Bridges and Susan Bridges. They emphasize that individuals must go through three phases: the New Beginning Zone, the Neutral Zone, and the Ending, Losing, Letting Go Zone.[29]

Session Seven – N/A

Conclusion

The project results helped me initiate conative change in the leaders attending the symposium. Several insights emerged from the collected qualitative data, including pre-project and post-project questionnaires, journaling assignments, and one-on-one interviews. The findings indicated that providing targeted educational training about the *charismata* and their role in the local church effectively equips leadership to educate members about the Spirit's presence and involvement in church ministry. The movement of the Spirit in Session Three created a powerful moment, not only for the individual who experienced the awakening, but also for each participant and the contextual associates who felt the Spirit's move. The 100-Day Listening Prayer and Fasting period was crucial in saturating the atmosphere with the Spirit as the church prepared for the centennial celebration in June 2025. This inspired the clergy and other leaders to sustain intercessory prayer each Sunday. It has continued to this day.

Randy Clark shares that the Spirit's presence not only emits holiness but also releases power.[30] The Holy Spirit acts as a change agent, breaking the grip of systemic

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[29] William Bridges and Susan Mitchell Briges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2016), 5.

[30] Randy Clark, *The Essential Guide to the Power of the Holy Spirit: God's Miraculous Gifts at Work Today* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishing, Inc., 2015), 49.

strongholds, barriers, patterns, ideologies, and traditions that oppose God's works, as well as other demonic powers. Clark shares the following narrative:

> When evaluating a work of the Holy Spirit, some comment that the different manifestations of the Spirit's work in someone's life are not sufficient to produce holiness and to confirm the authentic power that God is at work. Phenomena that often occur in the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Third Wave Movements include tongues, falling under the power, trances, prophecy, and feeling electricity. Scripture indicates that tongues, falling, trances, and energy are all indicators of the Spirit's presence.[31]

The "electricity" felt by the volunteer in Session Three was a sign of the Spirit's presence in this project. The belief being considered is that the sign is not based on "speaking in tongues" but in the Spirit's power through its presence.[32] I believe the leaders in the training session, whether knowingly or unknowingly, understood how we allowed the Holy Spirit to saturate the environment, which led to the awakening at MCCBC on Saturday, July 26, 2025. This occurrence is relevant when thinking about how Charles Finney prayed everywhere he went.

When assessing the pre-project and post-project responses, there is still a need for education on certain topics, particularly the difference between Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity. Appendix J provides two tables, one for the pre-project and one for the post-project responses. The "Yes" responses for the pre-project showed that the participant's answer was relevant to the concept, demonstrated clear reasoning, and addressed all parts of the questions. A "No" response indicated that the participant's answer was incomplete, lacked relevant information, or showed a misunderstanding of

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[31] Clark, *The Essential Guide to the Power of the Holy Spirit*, 49.

[32] David Young, *Theology for the Charismatic Church* (Woodbridge, VA: Crown Trust Books, 2023), 15-16.

key concepts. The “Yes” post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire indicated that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium. A “No” response suggested that the participant still had little to no knowledge of how to respond to the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer. The chart below provides a pictorial view of the participant’s responses to the ten questions.

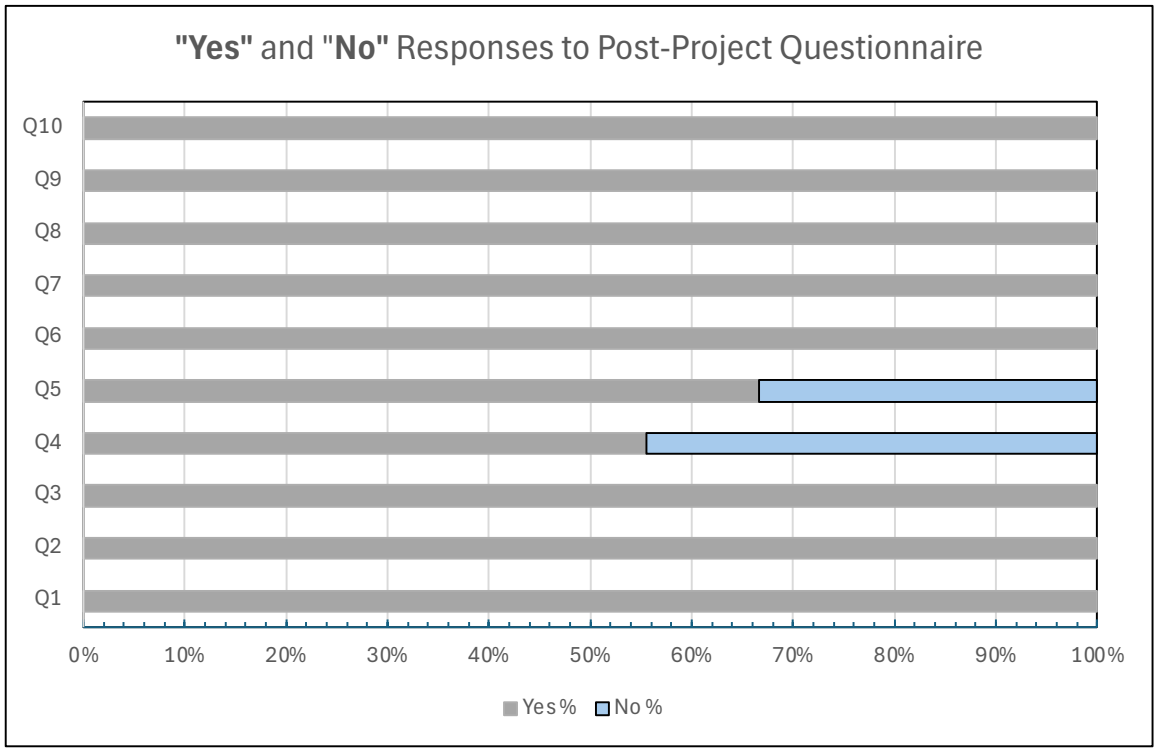

Table 1. “Yes” and “No” Responses to Post-Project Questionnaire

The table shows that “Yes” responses for Question 4 (What is your understanding of Pentecostalism?) accounted for 56%, while “No” responses accounted for 44%. Responses for Question 5 (What is the difference, if any, between Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity?) were 67% and 33%, respectively.

These questions remain points of contention among many theologians. The debates are ongoing as the Classical Pentecostals discuss their central experience, "baptism in the Spirit" or "filling with the Spirit," which many believe is accompanied by speaking in tongues.[33] These debates focus on essential doctrines and their implications, such as the doctrines of consequence and subsequent.[34] The doctrine of consequence, also called "initial evidence," refers to speaking in tongues as the primary evidence or "consequence" of Spirit baptism. In contrast, the doctrine of subsequence holds that Spirit baptism is a distinct and "subsequent" experience to conversion.[35]

However, I support James Dunn's position, which aligns more closely with the FGBCFI's beliefs as a Charismatic Christian: the gift of the Spirit (or Spirit Baptism) is primarily an experience linked to conversion rather than a separate or subsequent experience that Christians should actively seek.[36] He instead views the Spirit Baptism as synonymous with conversion. This aligns with a similar position described in David Young's book: to be a Charismatic Christian relates to one's experience with the Holy Spirit, which results in a deeper understanding of its work in the church.[37] In other words, to become a Christian, you must accept and have a deep relationship with the Holy Spirit, the second person of the Trinity.

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[33] Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism, Second Edition* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 181.

[34] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 183.

[35] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 183.

[36] James Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today, Second Edition* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2020), 96.

[37] David Young, *Theology for the Charismatic Church* (Woodbridge, VA: Crown Trust Books, 2023), 4-5.

One of the other key takeaways for me was recognizing the importance of using adult learning teaching skills. Each of these volunteers had very different learning styles. Some were more cerebral than others. It was notable that the results of the take-home journaling activity totaled 107 pages, averaging 11.9 per participant (see Appendix D). An even more noteworthy aspect was that 57 pages, or 53.3% of the total, seemed to focus mainly on the period between Sessions 3 and 4. This is when the group experienced the move of the Spirit on one of the participants.

All the participants are categorized as adult learners. Accordingly, they seem to experience learning opportunities from a life-application perspective, based on my observations as a pastor and a former adjunct professor. There is no single way to teach an adult learner, according to Alisa Belzar and Brian Dashew.[38] The idea they present is to advance adult learners by teaching and motivating with methods that suit the learner. Belzar and Dashew share that educators need to be "an expert in their content area" to teach new content, knowledge, and skills effectively.[39] The educator must help to make the adult learner see themselves in their potential roles and ways of thinking. The facilitator or educator needs to create an inclusive learning environment in which the learner has a genuine interest in being part of change. Therefore, the educator needs to acknowledge the hopes, dreams, interests, identities, and barriers the adult learners might face. I plan to explore additional techniques and methods as I continue to move forward with training opportunities at MCCBC.

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[38] Alisa Belzar and Brian Dashew, eds, *Understanding the Adult Learner: Perspectives and Practices*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2023), 4.

[39] Belzar, *Understanding the Adult Learner*, 4.

I realize that this project is only the initial phase. Throughout my spiritual journey, I have learned that I develop a deeper understanding of God's desires for me through the presence of His Holy Spirit (John 14:26). Peter Bellini, a professor of church renewal and evangelization at United Theological Seminary, emphasizes in his book that we must be mindful of the spirit world, authority, and deliverance.[40] The Holy Spirit teaches us that we have authority over evil in the name of Jesus.

Therefore, removing systematic strongholds will face opposition from Satan, his underworld, demons, and imps. Satan will not be satisfied until he has destroyed us (John 10:10). As a result, I recognize that this project will likely extend beyond its initial timeline. I am not approaching this merely as a pilot to complete a doctoral degree; rather, this project is an ongoing effort toward church renewal and revitalization of God's Kingdom here on earth. Additionally, I plan to reach beyond my context to provide training for other churches to help them remove strongholds so they can freely experience a deeper sense of the Spirit's charismatic lead in church operation and congregational worship, regardless of their denomination. The charismatic movement has been accepted virtually by every Protestant tradition, including the Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, and others.[41]

To maintain the project's momentum, I recently announced that the church will start a "Coffee Break" session right after morning worship on one Sunday each month. The purpose of The Coffee Break is to allow parishioners to meet with the leadership

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[40] Peter J. Bellini, *The X-Manual: Exousia-A Comprehensive Handbook on Deliverance and Exorcism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022), xx.

[41] Stanley M. Burgess, Gary McGee, and Patrick H. Alexander, *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 133.

team and me in a casual setting, promoting genuine conversation outside the traditional church environment. This is an opportunity for individuals to ask questions about the sermons, Bible study, and prayer meetings, weekly devotionals, and community and national issues. Additionally, attendees can share ideas openly or through a suggestion box about ministry initiatives or any other topics.

My experience as the sole project investigator has strengthened and confirmed my role as a prophetic voice for MCCBC and others. I feel more capable of being the prophet-servant who communicates with God on behalf of the people. The way the teaching unfolded and the move of the Spirit among the project's attendees have further positioned me to expand into other roles. As a pastoral care provider, I have broadened the concept of care to include civil rights, social justice, spiritual apartheid, as well as participating in the social gospel movement to address housing and coping with second-class citizenship. Regarding social justice, this issue is not about whether a person is a Republican, Democrat, Socialist, Independent, or belongs to another party affiliation. It is about a moral and ethical responsibility that calls us to speak life and truth. Consequently, I discovered that the project does have a liberation and social justice aspect. The prophet cannot touch the hearts and souls of the congregation, community, and beyond if we become irrelevant to their needs, concerns, hopes, and so on.

I believe God allowed me to undertake this journey. A former UTS recruiter approached me about five years ago to consider enrolling at the seminary. However, I ignored the invitation. Then one day, the Spirit overwhelmed me with the realization that I needed to be relevant as a senior pastor in these contemporary times. The Lord revealed to me that I needed to reconnect to the DNA of the Trinitarian God. I started to share

(complain) with God how the prosperity of the people “around me,” including other pastors, seemed to grow each day. But then I had an Asaph moment (Ps. 73:16-17) and realized I need to “enter the sanctuary of God.” It was divine wisdom that gave me clarity and peace to seek Him.

APPENDIX A

EVENT INVITATION FLYER

Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church
608 Stambaugh Avenue, Columbus, OH 43207
614-444-0701

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

For a research project focused on removing systemic barriers in shifting congregational paradigms of worship and practice.

(Must be 18 Years or older to participate)

Objective: This research aims to develop a better understanding and deeper relationship with Jesus and His Church through focused educational workshops about the Spirit's charismatic role in the Church.

For more information, please contact the church at 614-444-0701 or email the Project Investigator, Overseer Leon Rodgers, at lrodgers1@united.edu.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

United Theological Seminary
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Investigator: Leon E. Rodgers
Contact Information: lrodgers1@united.edu or 614-214-1216

Introduction: I am a doctoral student at United Theological Seminary.

Purpose: I am conducting a study on a research study focused on removing systemic barriers in shifting congregational paradigms of worship and practice at the Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church, Columbus, OH.

Name of participant:

_____
Please print first & last name

Please read and initial each section below.
(Your initials indicate you have read and understand each section.)

Requirements for Participation:
_____ I agree to take part in this project as a human research subject. I understand that I can withdraw from my participation at any time without having to provide an explanation. I acknowledge that if I decide to withdraw, it will not impact my membership or leadership responsibilities at Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church. I recognize that I will not receive any compensation for my involvement as a human research subject in this project.

Procedures:
_____ I agree to participate in the study and to visit Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church for both pre-project and post-project questionnaires, journaling assignments, interviews, and studies of both biblical and secular content. This project will aim to implement a symposium featuring several learning objectives, including spiritual disciplines, intercessory prayer, and skills for managing organizational change.

Human Subject Participation:
_____ All participants must be 18 years or older and have consented to participate in the study. All participants must be protected and treated fairly throughout the study. However, pregnant women, minors, prisoners, individuals with cognitive impairments, and others, including active military personnel, trauma survivors, abuse survivors, and grieving individuals, are examples of those who are not permitted to enroll as potential volunteer participants for the Final Project.

Risks:
_____ I do not foresee any risks in participating in this research. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous, and no one will be able to deduce my exact identity from them. If the Project Investigator decides to use quotes from my feedback, those will

also be anonymous. My contributions to the study will be kept confidential for its duration. In the event of accidental data disclosure, there could be legal, financial, social, or personal consequences. Additionally, the Project Investigator will follow the state's mandatory reporting laws.

Benefits:

_____ I understand that the expected benefits of participating in this research are that I will develop a better understanding and deeper relationship with Jesus and His Church through focused educational workshops about the Spirit's charismatic role in the Church. These workshops would help remove barriers and allow the participant to experience the charismatic movement of the Holy Spirit.

Voluntariness:

_____ I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I can skip any questions I choose not to answer. I can also stop participating at any time. I recognize that my involvement will have no impact on my membership. If I feel uncomfortable at any point during the study, I can reach out to the Project Investigator in person or through electronic communication. Furthermore, I understand that I can refuse to answer any or all questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time.

Confidentiality:

_____ I understand that the Project Investigator will be diligent in keeping my information confidential and ensuring that all discussions remain private as well. While there is always a slight risk of unauthorized or accidental disclosure, all conversations will be recorded and transcribed. All notes, recordings, and transcriptions will be maintained with confidentiality. The Project Investigator will be the sole individual with access to this information, and the files will be encrypted and password-protected. I recognize that the Project Investigator will have research assistants to assist with various research tasks.

Summary:

_____ I understand that I can reach out to the Project Investigator for answers to questions related to this study directly by telephone or email.

Signature:

Signing this consent form indicates that you have read it or had it read to you and wish to participate in the study. Please refrain from signing the consent form if you do not wish to participate. Your participation in the study is entirely your choice, and no one will be upset if you choose not to sign this consent form or if you change your mind later. You acknowledge that you have been informed about this study, why it is being conducted, and what is required from you.

_____	_____
Signature of Person Agreeing to Participate in the Project/Study	Date Signed

APPENDIX C

LETTER FOR DMIN PROJECT

Dear Potential Volunteer

My name is Leon Rodgers, and I am a doctoral candidate at United Theological Seminary. I am conducting a study focused on removing systemic barriers in shifting congregational paradigms of worship and practice at the Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church in Columbus, OH. I am the principal investigator of this project.

I am required to create and implement a Final Project to meet the academic requirements of United's Doctor of Ministry program. The key details of the project are listed below:

> **PROBLEM STATEMENT**: The problem at Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church is led by certain ministry leaders and members who actively resist acknowledging and following the Holy Spirit's charismatic lead regarding church operation and congregational worship.
>
> **HYPOTHESIS**: **If ministry leaders participate in a focused educational symposium about charismata and its roles in the local church, they will be equipped to educate the membership about the Holy Spirit's presence and involvement in ministry.**
>
> **TIMEFRAME: July 19, 2025, to August 9, 2025,**
> **NOTE:** The project will be conducted in seven sessions on Saturday and Sunday afternoons from July 19, 2025, to August 10, 2025.
>
> **SITE: Mount Carmel Community Baptist Church**
>
> **ZOOM CALL:** Monday, May 19th, from 8:30 PM to 9:00 PM. This call is for the first round of potential volunteers to hear the project's salient requirements.
>
> **ZOOM LINK**:
> Join Zoom Meeting
> https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82156598882?pwd=LuGrumpTaRET7hQxYOky7jd91M4E6X.1
>
> Meeting ID: 821 5659 8882
> Passcode: 858165

If you choose to participate, it will be on a voluntary, non-paid basis. A consent form must be executed before participating in the research project.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments.

Respectfully and Humbly Submitted,

Leon E. Rodgers Sr

Overseer Leon E. Rodgers Sr., Senior Pastor

Mobile: 614-214-1216
Email: lrodgers1@united.edu

APPENDIX D

JOURNALING TIPS

Journaling Tips

Here are some journaling tips for volunteers involved in this research project. Remember, these tips are ideas to consider while journaling. You don't need to address all the points. Again, these are suggestions to keep in mind as you journal.

FOCUSING ON YOUR EXPERIENCES:

1. **Document Specific Instances:** Instead of general feelings, try to recall and describe specific moments where you felt the presence, guidance, or influence of the Holy Spirit. What happened? What were the circumstances? What were your thoughts and emotions?
2. **Note Physical Details:** If applicable, describe any physical experiences you associate with these moments (e.g., a feeling of warmth, a sense of peace, a clear thought, a feeling of being moved to action).
3. **Record Your Internal Dialogue:** Pay attention to your thoughts and internal conversations. Did you have intuitive nudges, sudden insights, or a firm conviction? Describe these as they occurred.
4. **Track Changes Over Time:** As the research progresses, note any shifts or developments in your understanding or experience of the Holy Spirit. Are there patterns emerging? Are you noticing things you didn't before?
5. **Reflect on Your Prayer Life:** Document how you feel the Holy Spirit interacts with your prayers. Do you experience specific promptings, comfort, or a sense of connection during worship?
6. **Observe Interactions with Others:** Note any instances where you believe the Holy Spirit was at work in your interactions with others (e.g., feeling led to say something specific, experiencing unexpected empathy, witnessing a moment of grace).

PROVIDING USEFUL DATA FOR THE RESEARCH:

7. **Be Detailed and Descriptive:** The more specific you are in your entries, the more valuable your insights will be for the research team. Avoid vague statements.
8. **Use Dates and Times:** Mark each entry with the date and time to help track the progression of your experiences.
9. **Note the context:** Describe the environment, your emotional state before the experience, and any relevant background information.
10. **Distinguish between feelings and interpretations:** While your feelings are important, describe what led you to interpret a particular experience as the work of the Holy Spirit.
11. **Be Honest and Authentic:** There are no "right" or "wrong" experiences. Capture your genuine thoughts and feelings, even if they are uncertain or complex.
12. **Follow Any Specific Instructions:** The research team may provide specific prompts or areas of focus for your attention. Be sure to adhere to these guidelines in your journaling.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND GROWTH:

13. **Reflect on Scripture:** If a specific Bible verse or passage resonates with your experience, write it down and contemplate its connection.
14. **Consider the Fruit of the Spirit:** As you journal, reflect on whether you notice any fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control) in your life or the situations you describe.
15. **Identify Areas of Growth:** Your journaling may uncover areas where you feel a deeper connection to the Holy Spirit or aspects where you wish to enhance your understanding and experience.
16. **Acknowledge Doubt or Uncertainty:** Having questions or moments of doubt is okay. Honestly, record these as part of your process.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR JOURNALING:

17. **Find a Consistent Time:** Journal at the same time each day or week to create a routine.
18. **Keep it Accessible:** Have your journal easily accessible so you can jot down notes while experiences are still fresh in your mind.

Your contributions to this research project are invaluable. By journaling mindfully and in detail, you provide rich data that can help me, as the primary project investigator, to understand the multifaceted ways the Holy Spirit interacts with individuals.

I appreciate your dedication!

APPENDIX E

PROJECT OVERVIEW SESSION 1-7

Session 1: Project Overview & Chapter 1 Discussion (Slides 1 -18)

- Welcome & Symposium Overview.
    - The project involved seven sessions focused on worship practice, participant selection, and consent procedures. It addresses systemic issues within the church and emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in worship. Participants completed the pre-questionnaire.
    - Overview included:
        - Participant Exclusion Criteria
        - Participant Selection Process
        - Consent Form Review
        - Problem Statement
        - Hypothesis
- Chapter 1 - Synergy
    - The chapter explored the connection between the pastor's journey and the church's needs, highlighting renewal through historical revivals.
    - Creation of Historical Timeline
        - Formation & Leadership History
    - Baptist Oversight and Governance
        - Church Hurt
        - Pastor's Call to MCCBC

Session 2: Charismatic Church Service (Slides 19-20)

- Worship Service – Sunday, July 20, 2025 @ 3:00 PM

Session 3: Chapter 2 - Biblical Foundation (Slides 21-32)

- Connect to the DNA of God
- Confrontation on Mount Carmel
    - Events Leading up to the Confrontation Part I
    - Events Leading to the Confrontation Part II
    - Social-political background
    - Key Characters
    - Lessons From the Confrontation

Session 4: Chapter 3 – Historical Foundation (Slides 33-38)

- Spiritual Transformative Leader: Charles Grandison Finney)
- Revival & Great Awakenings
- Effects of the Great Awakenings
- Secondary Leaders & Movements: William Joseph Seymour and Charles Harrison Mason
- Lessons Learned

Session 5: Chapter 4 – Theological Foundation (Slides 39-43)

- The Theological chapter explored the transition from traditional to charismatic worship styles and the pastor's role as a theologian. This chapter emphasized the church's Trinitarian relationship with God and the Holy Spirit's transformative power.
- The Context's Worship Style needed a motivational, attitude (conative) change in accepting and acknowledging the presence of the Holy Spirit in every element of the church operations and worship. This encapsulates the context of worship as a transformative spiritual journey

that engages with God to shape our theology, guided by the Holy Spirit, who is influenced by the senior pastor through his ties to the historical figures addressed in Chapter Three.

- Introduction to Theology
    - Purpose of theology.
    - Role of the pastor.
- Walkabout With God
    - Senior pastor's personal experiences at the context.
    - Personal
- Lessons Learned

Session 6: Chapter 5 – Interdisciplinary Foundation (Slides 44-52)

- This chapter discussed the need for transformation in response to social changes and the importance of managing transitional changes through effective leadership that results in a "good church" focused on God and healing.
    - Transition of Worship Practices.
        - Shared that a successful transitions require the internalization of changes, strategic planning to address church needs, and community engagement.
    - Managing Transitional Changes.
    - Management of change requires an effective definition of a "good church" based on influences from leadership, transitional worship practices, coupled with transformative worship services, without compromising the mission and the message of the mission of God.
- Lessons Learned

Session 7: Culture of Honor & Ongoing Praxis (Slides 53-55)

- This session emphasized the importance of fostering a culture of honor through worship and praise, as well as the Holy Spirit's role in church life.
    - Through Worship & Praise
    - Through A Conative Change

APPENDIX F

IMPORTANT DATES AND TIMES

Doctor of Ministry Project by Primary Investigator: Leon Rodgers
Important Dates, Days, and Times for the Seven (7) Sessions
From July 19, 2025, through August 9, 2025

United Theological Seminary DMin by Project Investigator: Leon Rodgers				
SESSION	**DATE**	**DAY**	**ESTIMATED START TIME**	**ESTIMATED END TIME**
Session 1	**July 19**	**Saturday**	**1:00 PM**	**3:30 PM**
• Welcome and overview of the project; and overview of sessions 2-7.				
Session 2	**July 20**	**Sunday**	**3:00 PM**	**5:00 PM**
• Introduction of a charismatic worship service to MCCBC; Bishop Duane C. Tisdale will be the guest speaker				
Session 3	**July 26**	**Saturday**	**1:00 PM**	**4:10 PM**
• Investigator's spiritual journey; lessons learned from Elijah's confrontation on Mount Carmel; and parallels to MCCBC				
Session 4	**July 27**	**Sunday**	**12:00 Noon**	**3:30 PM**
• Review of spiritual movements and leaders relevant to the project; Lunch will be provided				
Session 5	**August 2**	**Saturday**	**1:00 PM**	**4:00 PM**
• Definition and overview of theology and other relevant ideologies relevant for the project; introduction to history of founder and FGBCFI; and review of Baptist Articles of Faith and FGBCFI Distinctives.				
Session 6	**August 3**	**Sunday**	**12:00 Noon**	**3:05 PM**
• Definition and overview of relevant interdisciplinary disciplines for the project; definition of a "good church".				
Session 7	**August 7**	**Saturday**	**1:00 PM**	**3:15 PM**
• Post-project questionnaire will be presented to volunteers; summary of the biblical teachings; divine praxis of creating the culture of honor at MCCBC.				

Comments:

1. Light refreshments will be served at all Saturday sessions.
2. Lunch will be provided for Sunday sessions, except for Session 2.

APPENDIX G

PROJECT CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

Project Calendar of Activities
Removing Systemic Strongholds in Shifting Congregational Paradigms of Worship and Praxis

Session 1 – Saturday, July 19, 2025

5 minutes: Welcome and gather consent forms signed by all participants. Blank consent forms will be provided for anyone who has not submitted a signed form, enabling their participation in the project. Review group norms.
20 minutes: Volunteers will fill out the pre-project questionnaire.
15 minutes: The introduction to the Final Project will present an overview of the professional associates and supporting staff, the project topic, problem statement, hypothesis, pericope, key biblical and historical figures, and the symposium's goals.
15 minutes Review the principal project investigator's rights and responsibilities and each participant's roles. This review will include descriptions of the pre-project and post-project questionnaires, journaling exercises, and one-on-one interviews, highlighting each participant's importance for the project's success. The one-on-one interviews will be scheduled as virtual calls at a time convenient for the participants, between the sessions and before the final session.
10 minutes: Break
60 minutes: Summarize the teaching topics based on the research findings to effectively implement the hypothesis using the four foundational papers: biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary.
5 minutes: Explain the purpose of notebook journals to participants (e.g., to capture thoughts, feelings, and experiences).
5 minutes: Review the agenda for future sessions.
5 minutes: Discuss how the lesson can be applied and prompts for journaling
1 minute: Invite the participants to the regular morning worship.

Session 2 – Sunday, July 20, 2025

15 minutes: Intercessory prayer period
15 minutes: Praise and worship period
5 minutes: Overview of the purpose of the worship service (i.e., introduction to a charismatic worship experience)
10 minutes: Preparatory song
25 minutes: Homily/sermon
15 minutes: Altar call
5 minutes: Observation and announcements
1 minute: Benediction

Session 3 – Saturday, July 26, 2025

5 minutes: Welcome, review group norms, and highlight the agenda for this session.
10 minutes: The principal project investigator will share how the project has been part of his spiritual journey. It has transformed his attitude toward the Holy Spirit amidst his struggles. This transformation will enable him to incorporate a schematic of "prayer circuits" into the hearts of the congregants, thereby linking the church's DNA to the Trinitarian God.
60 minutes: The principal project investigator will present a lesson on the biblical events of the pericope (1 Kings 18:16-39) leading up to the confrontation at Mount Carmel. This will include the socio-political background, the Deuteronomistic history, and the key characters in the pericope: Elijah, Ahab, Jezebel, and the local gods of Baal and Asherah.
10 minutes: Break
30 minutes: Review the key lessons learned in the pericope.
45 minutes: Discuss the parallels between the challenges at Mount Carmel and contemporary issues related to superficial worship versus authentic worship, which illustrate the Holy Spirit's manifestation in service. Address the myriad "baals" prevalent in today's society, including disinformation and misinformation found on social media platforms, news networks, and other issues such as false prophecies, betrayals, mistrust, and messages that seek to undermine the church's power.
20 minutes: Discuss how the lesson can be applied and prompts for journaling.

Session 4 – July 27, 2025

5 minutes: Welcome, review group norms, and highlight the agenda for this session.
60 minutes: The principal project investigator will provide a lesson on analyzing the Evangelical Revival, the Great Awakenings (First and Second), and the importance of Charles Grandison Finney. The lesson will discuss the religious landscape in the late 1700s (during the American Revolutionary War) and 1800s, the effects of the Great Awakenings on America's revitalization, including a brief discussion on the rise of rationalism and a philosophical view that truth is known through human reasoning, and the growth of revivals (the surprising outbreak of the work of God across all denominations) throughout America.
10 minutes: Break
45 minutes: Secondary leaders and movements relevant to the Final Project. This will include an overview of William Seymour, recognized as the leader of the Azusa Street Revival, and Charles Mason, a former Baptist cleric who became one of the founders of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) denomination.
20 minutes: Discuss how these individuals had a profound impact on the principal investigator, allowing him to feel a sense of affirmation regarding the movement of the Spirit upon his life and in leading the context to connect with its spiritual DNA through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
20 minutes: Discuss how the lesson can be applied and prompts for journaling.

Session 5 – Saturday, August 2, 2025

5 minutes: Welcome, review group norms, and highlight the agenda for this session.
60 minutes: The principal project investigator will provide an overview of theology (the study of God) and briefly discuss its four main branches: biblical, systematic, historical, and practical theology. He will explain that theology is essential for the church's life because it helps the church interpret the narrative of God, the world, the history of Israel, and the events leading to salvation. He will review how his project centers on practical theology as the overarching framework for Pentecostal and Charismatic theologies to implement in teaching within this context. The lessons will include analyses of theological themes, definitions of key terms, the church's mission, views of pastors as theologians, and how theologians express the reality of God and His revelation to the world. There will be discussions on how theology examines and sometimes critiques traditions, practices, and dogmas established in the church.
10 minutes: Break
30 minutes: Review the eighteen Articles of Faith for the Baptist Church.
30 minutes: Introduction to the history of the FGBCFI. The overview will include a brief history of the founder, Bishop
Paul S. Morton, Sr., and the denominational affiliation statement.
25 minutes: Brief overview of the FGBCFI distinctives that
seek to acknowledge the spiritual gifts, heavenly language, the power to cast out demons, and so on, as addressed in the FGBCFI statement regarding "The Right to Choose" to operate in the freeness of the spiritual gifts.
20 minutes: Discuss how the lesson can be applied and prompts for journaling.

Session 6 – Sunday, August 3, 2025

5 minutes: Welcome, review group norms, and highlight the agenda for this session.
60 minutes: The principal project investigator will provide an overview of the meaning of interdisciplinary disciplines and why they are essential to the project. He will then share that the interdisciplinary discipline selected for the project is transformation, defined as "a change in composition or structure, or a change in outward form or appearance, or a change in character or condition (convert)." The project examines the change in the church's attitude toward its understanding of the Holy Spirit.
10 minutes: Break
40 minutes: Discussion on interdisciplinary disciplines that link the church to transformation theories and their relation to church renewal. The investigator will discuss some of the interdisciplinary premises in defining a "good church" that is God-centered and committed to the entire gospel message of the Bible. The Hebrew word "tov"(Hebrew for "good ") will be explained about how churches without it can become toxic environments. The lesson will include seven elements that nurture a church free from toxicity. The investigator will also explore the

psychology of change and how to manage the three phases of transitions in change.

30 minutes: Pastoral care session focusing on managing the seasons of change.
20 minutes: Lessons about effective habits during transitions.
20 minutes: Discuss how the lesson can be applied and prompts for journaling.

Session 7 – Saturday, August 9, 2025

5 minutes: Welcome, review group norms, and highlight the agenda for this session.
20 minutes: Volunteers to complete the post-project questionnaire.
40 minutes: A summary of the biblical teachings and the paradigm shift in the divine praxis of the context. The principal investigator will present a training session for the ongoing praxis of "Creating the Culture of Honor," which requires believers to enter worship with a period of praise. In other words, establish the appropriate atmosphere for praise and worship within the context with a change in attitude of understanding regarding the Holy Spirit's role in the church and its operations. This will be supported by teaching from 2 Chronicles 7:11-16: to be humble, pray, seek God, and practice avoiding sin.
10 minutes: Break.
40 minutes: Group discussions about their experiences.
10 minutes: Distribute certificates to all participants and collect the journals and prompts for journaling.

APPENDIX H

TRANSFORMATIVE SPIRITUAL WORSHIP SERVICE FLYER

MT. CARMEL COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH
Transformative Spiritual Worship Service
Bishop Duane C. Tisdale
Friendship Baptist Church
Toledo, Ohio
Pastor Leon E. Rodgers, Sr.
Mt. Carmel Community Baptist Church
Columbus, Ohio
JOIN US SUNDAY, JULY 20, 2025
ROMANS 12:1-2
3:00 PM
Service will be available via LIVE or at (563) 999-5024
MT. CARMEL COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH
608 STAMBAUGH AVENUE
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43207
OVERSEER LEON E. RODGERS SR., SENIOR PASTOR
(614) 444-0701
WEBSITE: MTCARMELCBC.ORG
EMAIL: OFFICE@MTCARMELCBC.ORG

APPENDIX I

BAPTIST ARTICLES OF FAITH

Articles of Faith for the Baptist Church

1) Of the Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction (1); that it has God for its author, salvation for its end (2), and truth without any mixture of error for its matter (3); that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us (4); and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union (5), and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried (6).

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Sam. 23:2; Acts 1:16; 3:21; John 10:35; Luke 16:29-31; Psa. 119:11; Rom. 3:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Acts 11:14; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16; John 5:38-39; Prov. 30:5-6; John 17:17; Rev. 22:18-19; Rom. 3:4Rom. 2:12; John 12:47-48; 1 Cor. 4:3-4; Luke 10:10-16; 12:47-48; Phil. 3:16; Eph. 4:3-6; Phil. 2:1-2; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:11; 1 John 4:1; Isa. 8:20; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:6; Jude 3:5; Eph. 6:17; Psa. 119:59-60;

EXPLANATION: The First Baptist Article of Faith states that the Bible is God's divinely inspired, error-free, and authoritative Word, given to humanity mainly for salvation. It serves as the ultimate standard for all aspects of Christian faith and life and is the unifying foundation for believers.

2) Of The True God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is Jehovah, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth (1); inexpressibly glorious in holiness (2), and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love (3); that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (4); equal in every divine perfection (5), and executing distinct and harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (6).

John 4:24; Psa. 147:5; 83:18; Heb. 3:4; Rom. 1:20; Jer. 10:10Exod. 15:11; Isa. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Rev. 4:6-8; Mark 12:30; Rev. 4:11; Matt. 10:37; Jer. 2:12-13; Matt. 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 1 John 5:7; John 10:30; 5:17; 14:23; 17:5, 10; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:10-11; Phil. 2:5-6 Eph. 2:18; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5; Col. 2, 7

EXPLANATION: The Second Baptist Article of Faith describes God as the one, infinite, intelligent, holy, and sovereign Creator, known as Jehovah. It then presents the Trinitarian view of God, stating that within the single Godhead, there are three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who are fully equal in divine nature and work together in perfect harmony for the salvation of humanity.

3) Of The Fall of Man

We believe that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker (1); but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state (2); in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners (3), not by constraint, but choice (4); being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore, under just condemnation to eternal ruin (5), without defense or excuse (6).

Gen. 1:27, 31; Eccl. 7:29; Acts 16:26; Gen. 2:16; Gen. 3:6-24; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 5:19; John 3:6; Psa. 51:5; Rom. 5:15-19; 8:7; Isa. 53:6; Gen. 6:12; Rom. 3:9-18; Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 1:18, 32; 2:1-16; Gal. 3:10; Matt. 20:15; Ezek. 18:19-20; Rom. 1:20; 3:19; Gal. 3:22

EXPLANATION: The Third Baptist Article of Faith states that humanity was created perfect but intentionally chose to disobey God, resulting in a fallen state. This fall caused all people to inherit a sinful nature that inclines them toward evil. As a result, everyone is a sinner by both nature and choice, justly condemned to eternal ruin, with no valid defense for their condition. This article lays the foundation for understanding the need for Christ's atoning work, which is further explored in subsequent articles.

4) Of The Way of Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace (1); through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God (2); who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin (3); honored the divine law by his personal obedience (4); and by his death made a full atonement for our sins (5); that having risen from the death, he is now enthroned in heaven (6); and uniting in his wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Savior (7).

Eph. 2:5; Matt. 18:11; 1 John 4:10; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; Acts 15:11 John 3:16; 1:1-14; Heb. 4:14; 12:24; Phil. 2:6-7; Heb. 2:9, 14; 2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 42:21; Phil. 2:8; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 3:21; Isa. 53:4-5; Matt. 20:28; Rom. 4:25; 3:21-26; 1 John 4:10; 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:1-3; Heb. 9:13-15; Heb. 1:8, 3; 8:1; Col. 3:1-4; Heb. 7:25; Col. 2:9; Heb. 2:18; 7:26; Psa. 89:19; Psa. 14

EXPLANATION: The Fourth Baptist Article of Faith states that salvation is entirely a gift from God's grace, made possible only through the mediating work of Jesus Christ. Jesus, being both fully God and fully man (yet without sin), perfectly obeyed God's law and offered His death as full payment for human sin. His resurrection and ascension affirm His victory and current reign, showing that He is the perfectly qualified, compassionate, and powerful Savior for all who believe.

5) Of Justification

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ (1) secures to such as believe in him is Justification (2); that Justification includes the pardon of sin (3), and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness (4); that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer’s blood (5); by virtue of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God (6); that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity (7).

John 1:16; Eph. 3:8; Acts 13:39; Isa. 3:11-12; Rom. 8:1; Rom. 5:9; Zech. 13:1; Matt. 9:6; Acts 10:43; Rom. 5:17; Titus 3:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:7; 1 John 2:25; Rom. 5:21; Rom. 4:4-5; 5:21; 6:28; Phil. 3:7-9; Rom. 5:19; 3:24-26; 4:23-25; 1 John 2:12;

EXPLANATION: The Fifth Baptist Article of Faith declares that justification is a divine, legal act whereby God, based solely on a person's faith in Christ's atoning death and perfect righteousness, pardons all their sins and declares them righteous. This imputed righteousness of Christ is a free gift, not earned by human works, and it results in profound peace with God, His divine favor, and the assurance of all other necessary blessings for both the present life and eternity.

6) Of The Freeness of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel (1); that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith (2); and that nothing

prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel (3); which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation (4).

Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17; Luke 14:17; Rom. 16:26; Mark 1:15; Rom. 1:15-17; John 5:40; Matt. 23:37; Rom. 9:32; Prov. 1:24; Acts 13:46; John 3:19; Matt. 11:20; Luke 19:27; 2 Thess. 1:8

EXPLANATION: The Sixth Baptist Article of Faith highlights that salvation is a completely free and universal offer from God, accessible through the good news of Jesus Christ. Although it is free, it requires an immediate and sincere response of faith, including genuine belief, repentance from sin, and a life of obedience. The only thing that prevents anyone, regardless of how great their sin, from receiving this salvation is their own sinful nature, which leads to a conscious and voluntary rejection of God's gracious offer—rejection that brings about a more severe judgment.

7) Of Grace in Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again (1); that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind (2); that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth (3), so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel (4); and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life (5).

John 3:3, 6-7; 1 Cor. 1:14; Rev. 8:7-9; 21:27; 2 Cor. 5:17; Ezek. 36:26; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 2:28-29; 5:5; 1 John 4:7; John 3:8; 1:13; James 1:16-18; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; 1 John 5:1; Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:9-11; Eph. 5:9; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 3:14-21; Matt. 3:8-10; 7:20; 1 John 5:4, 18

EXPLANATION: The Seventh Baptist Article of Faith teaches that salvation requires a supernatural spiritual transformation called regeneration or being "born again." This inner change, brought about mysteriously by the Holy Spirit through God's Word, gives a person a new, holy disposition, enabling them to willingly believe and obey the gospel. The true nature of this regeneration is then evidenced by observable changes in their life, including genuine repentance, active faith, and a consistent pursuit of holiness.

8) Of Repentance and Faith

We believe that Repentance and Faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God (1); whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ (2), we turn to God with unfeigned (real, genuine, heartfelt) contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy (3); at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior (4).

Mark 1:15; Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8; 1 John 5:1; John 16:8; Acts 2:37-38; 16:30-31; Luke 18:13; 15:18-21; James 4:7-10; 2 Cor. 7:11; Rom.10:12-13; Psa.51; Rom. 10:9-11; Acts 3:22-23: Heb. 4:14; Psa. 2:6; Heb. 1:8; 8:25; 2 Tim. 1:12

EXPLANATION: The Eighth Baptist Article of Faith states that repentance and faith are both actions divinely enabled and humanly expressed, essential for salvation. The Holy Spirit renews the heart, leading to a strong conviction of sin and a clear understanding of Christ's saving work. This results in a sincere turning away from sin to God (repentance) and a heartfelt, exclusive trust in Jesus Christ, in all His offices, as the only and fully sufficient Savior (faith). These two aspects are inseparable and represent the active response to God's free offer of grace.

9) Of God's Purpose and Grace

We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners (1); that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end (2); that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable (3); that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy (4); that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree (5); that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel (6); that it is the foundation of Christian assurance (7); and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence (8).

2 Tim. 1:8-9; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; Rom. 11:5-6; John 15:15; 1; John 4:19; Hos. 12:9; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Acts 13:48; John 10:16; Matt. 20:16; Acts 15:14; Exod. 33:18-19; Matt. 20:15; Eph. 1:11; Rom. 9:23-24: Jer. 31:3; Rom. 11:28-29; James 1:17-18; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 11:32-36; 1 Cor. 4:7; 1:26-31; Rom. 3:27; 4:16; Col. 3:12; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; Cor 15:10; 1 Pet. 5:10; Acts 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Luke 18:7; John 15:16; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Cor. 9:22; Rom. 8:28-30; John 6:37-40; 2 Pet. 1:10; 1 Thess. 1:4-10; Rom. 8:28-30; Isa. 42:16; Rom. 11:29; 2 Pet. 1:10-11; Phil. 3:12; Heb. 6:11

EXPLANATION: The Ninth Baptist Article of Faith presents Election as God's eternal, gracious plan by which He chooses to save sinners, regenerating and sanctifying them. This plan is perfectly compatible with human free will, as it includes all the means of salvation. It is a glorious display of God's character, encouraging humility and ruling out boasting. Far from discouraging effort, it inspires passionate involvement in evangelism and righteous living, and it provides a firm foundation for Christian assurance, which believers are called to confidently confirm through their transformed lives.

1.

10) Of Sanctification

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the **will of God**, we are made partakers of his holiness (1); that it is a **progressive work** (2); that it is begun in regeneration (3); and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means-especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer (4).

1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; 2 Cor. 7:1; 13:9; Eph. 1:4; Prov. 4:18; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1; 2 Pet. 1:5-8; Phil. 3:12-16; John 2:29; Rom. 8:5; John 3:6; Phil. 1:9-11; Eph. 1:13-14; Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 13:5; Luke 11:35; 9:23; Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18; 4:30

EXPLANATION: The Tenth Baptist Article of Faith describes Sanctification as God's ongoing, progressive work in believers, beginning at regeneration, through which they are gradually made holy and increasingly like Christ. This transformation is powered by the Holy Spirit and actively pursued by believers through consistent engagement in spiritual disciplines such as studying the Bible, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

11) Of the Perseverance of Saints

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end (1); that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors (2); that a special Providence watches over their welfare (3); and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (4).

John 8:31; 1 John 2:27-28; 3:9; 5:18; 1 John 2:19; John 13:18; Matt. 13:20-21; John 6:66-69; Job 17:9; Rom. 8:28; Matt. 6:30-33; Jer. 32:40; Psa. 121:3; 91:11-12; Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13; Jude 24-25; Heb. 1:14; 2 Kings 6:16; Heb. 13:5; 1 John 4:4

EXPLANATION: The Eleventh Baptist Article of Faith teaches that true believers will steadfastly persevere in their faith until the end of their lives, and this perseverance is the sure sign of genuine conversion. This enduring faith is not due to their own strength but is upheld by the active, special power of God's providence, who keeps them secure through their ongoing faith until they reach their ultimate salvation. This doctrine highlights both divine preservation and human responsibility to continue in faith.

12) Of the Harmony of the Law and the Gospel

We believe that the Law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of his moral government (1); that it is holy, just, and good (2); and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin (3); to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy Law, is one great end of the Gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible Church (4).

Rom. 3:31; Matt. 5:17; Luke 16:17; Rom. 3:20; 4:15; Rom. 7:12, 7, 14, 22; Gal. 3:21; Psa. 119; Rom. 8:7-8; Josh. 24:19; Jer. 13:23; John 6:44; 5:44; Rom. 8:2, 4; 10:4; 1 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 8:10; Jude 20-21; Heb. 12:14; Matt. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:28

EXPLANATION: The Twelfth Baptist Article of Faith states that God's Law is a perfect, eternal, and unchanging expression of His moral character. While fallen humanity cannot obey this Law because of its inherent sinfulness, the Gospel, working through Jesus Christ as Mediator, does not negate the Law but rather frees sinners from the power of sin and enables them to live in sincere, heartfelt obedience to God's holy standards. This transformation is nurtured through the means of grace within the church. Thus, the Law reveals sin and the need for salvation, and the Gospel provides the power to fulfill the Law in the lives of believers.

13) Of a Gospel Church

We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers (1), associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel (2); observing the ordinances of Christ (3); governed by his laws (4), and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his Word (5); that its only scriptural officers are Bishops, or Pastors, and Deacons (6), whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

1 Cor. 1:1-13; Matt. 18:17; Acts 5:11; 8:1; 11:31; 1 Cor. 4:17; Cor 14:23; 3 John 9; 1 Tim. 3:5
Acts 2:41-42; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 5:12-13; 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23; Matt.18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:6; 2 Cor. 2:7; 1 Cor. 4:17; Matt. 28:20; John 14:15; 15:12; 1 John 4:21; John 14:21; 1 Thess.4.2; 2 John 6; Gal. 6:2; all the Epistles; Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 14:12; Phil. 1:27; 1 Cor. 12:14; Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; 15:22; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1

EXPLANATION: The Thirteenth Baptist Article of Faith defines a Gospel Church as a local assembly of believers who have been baptized, are bound together by a covenant based on gospel faith, regularly observe Christ's ordinances, are directly accountable to Christ's laws, exercise their God-given gifts and congregational autonomy, and are led by biblically qualified pastors/bishops and deacons. This article emphasizes the autonomy of the local church and its adherence to biblical patterns for its life and ministry.

14) Of Baptism And The Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer (1), into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost (2); to show forth, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life (3); that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a Church relation; and to the Lord's Supper (4), in which the members of the Church, by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to

commemorate together the dying love of Christ (5); preceded always by solemn self-examination (6).

Acts 8:36-39; Matt. 3:5-6; John 3:22-23; 4:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 16:32-34; 18:8 Matt. 28:19; Acts 10:47-48; Gal. 3:27-28; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:41-42; Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:26; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:28; 5:1, 8; 10:3-32; 11:17-32; John 6:26-71

EXPLANATION: The Fourteenth Baptist Article of Faith states that Christian baptism involves immersing a believer in water, symbolizing their identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, as well as their new life in Him. It serves as a requirement for church membership and participation in the Lord's Supper, which is a symbolic memorial meal observed by baptized church members, using bread and wine to remember Christ's atoning death, always preceded by solemn self-examination.

15) Of The Christian Sabbath

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath (1); and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes (2), by abstaining from all secular labor and sinful recreations (3); by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private (4) and public (5); and by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God (6).

Acts 20:7; Gen. 2:3; Col. 2:16-17; Mark 2:27; John 20:19; 1 Cor. 16:1- 2 Exod. 20:8; Rev. 1:10; Psa. 118:24 Isa. 58:13-14; 56:2-8 Psa. 119:15; Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 11:26; 13:44; Lev. 19:30; Exod. 46:3; Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2, 3; Psa. 26:8; 87:3; Heb. 4:3-11

EXPLANATION: The Fifteenth Baptist Article of Faith states that Sunday, the Lord's Day, is the Christian Sabbath reserved for spiritual purposes. This requires avoiding ordinary work and unholy activities and actively participating in personal spiritual practices like prayer and Bible study, as well as communal worship. Ultimately, observing the Christian Sabbath prepares believers and provides a glimpse of the eternal rest and glory awaiting God's people in heaven.

16) Of Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society (1); and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed (2); except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ (3) who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth (4).

Rom. 13:1-7; Deut. 16:18; 1 Sam. 23:3; Exod. 18:23; Jer.30:21; Matt. 22:21; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:1-8; Acts 5:29; Matt. 10:28; Dan. 3:15-18; 6:7-10; Acts 4:18-20; Matt. 23:10; Rom. 14:4; Rev. 19:16; Psa. 72:11; Psa. 2; Rom. 14:9-13

EXPLANATION: The Sixteenth Baptist Article of Faith teaches that civil government is an institution ordained by God for the good of society, and therefore, believers are obligated to honor, obey, and pray for those in authority. However, this obedience is limited: when human laws or commands directly conflict with God's revealed will, believers' ultimate allegiance is to Jesus Christ, who alone is the Lord of their conscience and the supreme ruler over all earthly kings. This article elegantly balances civic duty with paramount loyalty to God.

17) Of the Righteous and the Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked (1); that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in his esteem (2); while all such as continue in

impenitence and unbelief are in his sight wicked, and under the curse (3); and this distinction holds among men both in and after death (4).

Mal. 3:18; Prov. 12:26; Isa. 5:20; Gen. 18:23; Jer. 15:19; Acts 10:34- 35; Rom. 6:16; Rom. 1:17; 7:6; 1 John 2:29; 3:7; Rom. 6:18, 22; 1 Cor. 11:32; Prov.11:31; 1 Pet. 4:17-18; 1 John 5:19; Gal. 3:10; John 3:36; Isa. 57:21; Psa. 10:4; Isa 55:6-7; Prov. 14:32; Luke 16:25; John 8:21-24; Prov. 10:24; Luke 12:4-5; Luke 9:23- 26; John 12:25-26; Eccl. 3:17; Matt. 7:13-14

EXPLANATION: The Seventeenth Baptist Article of Faith affirms a vital, God-ordained spiritual division among humanity: those who are declared righteous through faith in Christ and are being sanctified by the Spirit, versus those who remain in unrepentance and unbelief. This distinction is crucial, as it determines a person's standing before God both in this life and for eternity.

18) Of the World to Come

We believe that the end of the world is approaching (1); that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven (2), and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution (3); that a solemn separation will then take place (4); that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy (5); and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness (6).

1 Pet. 4:7; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Heb. 1:10-12; Matt. 24:35; 1 John 2:17; Matt. 28:20; 13:39-40; 2 Pet. 3:3-13; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; Heb. 9:28; Acts 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18;5:1-11; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:12-59; Luke 14:14; Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; John 6:40; John 11:25-26; 2 Tim. 1:10; Acts 10:42; Matt. 13:49, 37-43; 24:30-31; 25:31-33; Matt. 25:35-41; Rev. 22:11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Mark 9:43-48; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 7; Phil. 3:19; Rom. 6:32; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; John 4:36; 2 Cor. 4:18; Rom. 3:5-6; 2 Thess. 1:6-12; Heb. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:5; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:2-16; Rev. 20:11-12; 1 John 2:28; 4:17

EXPLANATION: The Eighteenth Baptist Article of Faith affirms the imminent return of Christ, who will raise the dead for a final judgment. This judgment will lead to a permanent and everlasting separation: the wicked experiencing endless punishment in hell, and the righteous enjoying eternal joy in heaven. This final state, based on God's righteous principles, will be forever fixed for all humanity. This article offers both a solemn warning to the unrepentant and a glorious hope for believers.

APPENDIX J

FULL GOSPEL DISTINCTIVES

Full Gospel Distinctives

I. We believe the Full Gospel includes (A) the proclamation of both the eternal power of Calvary and the potential power of Pentecost, (B) the baptizing Power of Jesus Christ for salvation because of Calvary, and (C) the filling/controlling power of the Holy Ghost for service and Holy victorious living because of Pentecost. (Eph. 5:18, Acts 20:27).

EXPLANATION: The first Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI highlights their core belief in a complete understanding of the Gospel, covering both the saving work of Jesus Christ on Calvary and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. "We believe the Full Gospel includes (A) the proclamation of both the eternal power of Calvary and the potential power of Pentecost":

In essence, this statement articulates a belief that the "Full Gospel" is not just about initial salvation through Christ's death (Calvary) but also about the ongoing, empowering presence and work of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) for transformed living and effective ministry. It's a holistic view of the Christian experience, moving beyond mere forgiveness to a dynamic, Spirit-filled life.

II. We believe in the perpetual and continuing ecclesiastical value of all spiritual gifts for the edification of the Body of Christ until the end of this Church Age, which will be consummated by the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13; I Cor. 12-14; Rom. 12).

EXPLANATION: The second Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI emphasizes their belief in the ongoing relevance and purpose of all spiritual gifts within the church today. Let's break down the key components:

In summary, the second distinctive means that the FGBCFI believes that all the spiritual gifts described in the New Testament are still active and available today, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and are essential for the healthy growth, ministry, and spiritual development of the church until Jesus Christ returns. They reject the idea that these gifts ceased after the apostolic age.

III. We believe in the Divine personhood of the Holy Spirit and His present-day ministry to Believers, including the sovereign distribution of Spiritual Gifts which empowers believers for service in the Contemporary Church. (I Cor. 12:7-11).

EXPLANATION: The third Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI explores the nature of the Holy Spirit and His essential role in empowering believers for ministry in the modern church.

In summary, this distinctive affirms that the Holy Spirit is truly God, a distinct person in the Trinity, who is actively engaged in the lives of believers today. A core part of His present-day ministry is the sovereign bestowing of spiritual gifts upon individual believers, not based on merit but on His divine will, for the express purpose of empowering them to effectively serve and build up the church in the modern world.

IV. We believe in Jesus Christ as the Sovereign Giver of Spiritual Gifts to the church. We further believe that Spiritual Gifts are given for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ and are given without regard to ethnicity, social class or gender. (Eph. 4:7-12, Gal. 3:26-28).

EXPLANATION: The fourth Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI complements the previous one by specifically highlighting Jesus Christ's role in the distribution of spiritual gifts and reiterating the universal and purposeful nature of these gifts.

In summary, the fourth distinctive affirms that Jesus Christ is the ultimate source of spiritual gifts given to the church. These gifts are universally available to all believers, regardless of their background or gender, and their primary purpose is to equip believers for ministry, mature the saints, and build up the entire Body of Christ. It underscores the egalitarian nature of God's gifting and the functional importance of these gifts for the church's mission.

V. We believe in the full autonomy of the local church as an independent entity under the Lordship of Christ, through pastoral authority, with regard to: (A) government, polity, and operations (Titus 1:5; Acts 15:1-35), (B) discipline (I Cor. 5:5, Matt. 18:15-17, 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15), and (C) with the added value of the Episcopacy as a covering (Titus 1:5; Acts 15:1-35).

EXPLANATION: The fifth Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI describes their view of local church governance and structure, with a focus on its independence while also including the idea of an "Episcopacy as a covering." This combines traditional Baptist principles with an aspect more typical of Episcopal church structures.

In essence, the fifth distinctive demonstrates a nuanced approach to church governance. It upholds the fundamental autonomy of the local church in its self-governance, operations, and discipline, placing it directly under the Lordship of Christ and its pastoral leadership. However, it uniquely incorporates the concept of an Episcopacy, viewing it as a beneficial "covering" that provides spiritual leadership, accountability, and unity across the broader fellowship, without overriding the independence of individual congregations.

VI. We believe in the value of biblical terminology for leadership in the contemporary church: Bishop, Overseer, Pastor, Elder, Minister, and Deacon. We believe that all of these are designations for servant-leaders. (Jer. 3:15, Acts 20:28, II Cor. 6:4, I Tim. 3:1-7).

EXPLANATION: The sixth Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI outlines their understanding of church leadership titles and their underlying meaning. It emphasizes a biblical foundation for these roles and defines their fundamental characteristic as "servant-leadership."

In conclusion, the sixth distinctive means that the FGBCFI holds that the various leadership titles found in the Bible (Bishop, Overseer, Pastor, Elder, Minister, Deacon) are relevant and valuable for the contemporary church. Crucially, they believe that all these roles are fundamentally characterized by servant-leadership, where individuals are

called to humbly serve and equip the congregation, rather than to exercise authoritarian control. They base this understanding on specific biblical texts that outline the qualifications and responsibilities of these leaders.

VII. We believe in the formal and intentional praise and worship of Almighty God as a proper spirit-led, corporate acknowledgement and response to His person and work. (Ps. 46-50, John 4:23, 24).

EXPLANATION: The seventh Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI emphasizes the centrality and manner of worship within their understanding of Christian practice. It highlights a specific, intentional, and Spirit-led approach to corporate worship.

In summary, the seventh distinctive means that the FGBCFI places a high value on corporate worship that is deliberate, reverent, and actively led by the Holy Spirit. This worship is a direct and profound response to God's nature and actions, characterized by both heartfelt spiritual expression and adherence to biblical truth. It is a central and dynamic part of their church experience.

VIII. We believe in Jesus Christ as the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, who brings men and women at salvation into relationship with Himself and His Body, the Church. We further believe that it is the baptism of the Holy Ghost that places one into the Body of Christ. All believers have been baptized by Christ with the Holy Ghost. (Matt. 3:11; John 1:33; I Cor. 12:13).

EXPLANATION: The eighth Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI clarifies their understanding of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and its relationship to salvation and incorporation into the church. This distinctive is crucial as it addresses a point of theological difference between them and some traditional Pentecostal denominations, while firmly placing them in the "Full Gospel" or charismatic camp.
In summary, the eighth distinctive of the FGBCFI means that they believe:

1. Jesus Christ is the divine agent who baptizes believers with the Holy Spirit.
2. This Baptism with the Holy Spirit occurs at the very moment of salvation, serving to unite the new believer with Christ and incorporate them into His universal Church.
3. Therefore, every person who is genuinely saved has already been baptized by Christ with the Holy Spirit; it is not a secondary experience or an endowment reserved for a select few.

This position differentiates them from classical Pentecostalism, which typically views the "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" as a post-conversion experience for empowerment, often accompanied by the initial physical evidence of speaking in tongues. Full Gospel Baptists affirm the Holy Spirit's power and spiritual gifts (as seen in previous distinctives), but they define the *baptism* of the Holy Spirit as the salvific work of incorporation into Christ's body.

IX. We believe in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost for all Believers and that the Holy Ghost verifies and validates the Believer as a part of the Body of Christ. (Rom. 8:9).

EXPLANATION: The ninth Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI focuses on the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in every believer and the profound theological implications of that indwelling.

In summary, the ninth distinctive of the FGBCFI means that they believe:

1. The Holy Spirit permanently dwells within every single person who becomes a Christian. This is a universal truth for all believers.
2. The presence of this indwelling Holy Spirit serves as the unmistakable divine confirmation and proof that an individual is genuinely saved and has been incorporated into the universal Body of Christ, the Church. It's the spiritual seal of their adoption as God's children.

X. We believe the spirit-filled life as desirable, valuable and an issue of obedience for all Believers who are commanded to be filled with the Holy Ghost. We acknowledge that within the Body of Christ, the term “filled with the Holy Ghost” is often used interchangeably with the term “baptism of the Holy Ghost.” When referring to the controlling presence and power of the Holy Ghost, as a result of the submissive will and desire of the Believer, we allow such alternation of terms. We believe it is the will and command of God that every believer be “filled,” “walk in,” be “led by,” and “live in” the power of the Holy Ghost. (Eph. 5:18).

EXPLANATION: The tenth Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI distinguishes between the initial Baptism of the Holy Spirit (which they believe happens at salvation) and the ongoing "filling" of the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes that this "Spirit-filled life" is a continuous, commanded experience for all believers, crucial for living effectively.

In summary, the tenth distinctive means that the FGBCFI believes:

1. Living a life continually controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit is a non-negotiable command from God for *all* believers.
2. While the Baptism of the Holy Ghost places a believer into Christ's Body at salvation (Distinctive VIII), the "filling of the Holy Ghost" refers to the ongoing, dynamic, and desired experience of being continually influenced and empowered by the Spirit.
3. They are flexible with terminology, allowing "filled with the Holy Ghost" and "baptism of the Holy Ghost" to be used interchangeably when referring to this controlling presence and power that results from a believer's yieldedness.
4. Ultimately, God desires and commands that every believer actively "walk in," "be led by," and "live in" the power of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives.

XI. We believe all believers are exhorted to be filled, walk in, be led by, and live in the power of the Holy Ghost. (Eph. 5:18, Gal. 5:16, 18, and 25).

EXPLANATION: The eleventh Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI serves as a powerful summary and reinforcement of the emphasis on the Holy Spirit's ongoing, empowering work in the daily life of every believer. It essentially reiterates and consolidates the command and expectation for a "Spirit-filled life" previously discussed in Distinctive X, providing additional scriptural support.

In summary, the eleventh distinctive strongly affirms that:

1. Every Christian is called to a life that is continuously controlled, guided, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is a divine expectation and command.
2. This "Spirit-filled life" is expressed through actively being filled (continuously replenished), walking in (daily conduct), being led by (following His guidance), and living in (abiding in His power) the Holy Spirit.
3. The biblical basis for this expectation is rooted in passages that clearly exhort believers to maintain a dynamic and submissive relationship with the Holy Spirit for their practical Christian living.

It essentially solidifies the Full Gospel Baptist belief that the Holy Spirit's work is not just about initial salvation or occasional manifestations, but about empowering a consistent, vibrant, and obedient Christian walk for *all* who believe.

XII. We believe that it is God's desire that all believers live under the "Divine Direction" of the Holy Ghost. We believe that the filling of the Holy Ghost is an ongoing ministry of the Spirit in the life of the Believer that enables the Believer to live a life of power, victory, and glory to God (Acts 1:8, 2:4, 4:8, 4:31).

EXPLANATION: The twelfth Full Gospel Distinctive of the FGBCFI brings together several key themes from previous distinctives, strongly emphasizing the Divine Direction and continuous empowerment of the Holy Spirit for every believer, leading to a life of spiritual effectiveness and glorifying God.

In summary, the twelfth distinctive means that the FGBCFI believes:

1. God's active desire is for all believers to live under the direct guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. This is their "Divine Direction."
2. The "filling of the Holy Ghost" is a continuous and repeated work of the Spirit in the believer's life (distinct from the initial Baptism at salvation).
3. This ongoing filling and divine direction empowers believers to live lives characterized by spiritual strength, triumph over adversity, and ultimately, to bring maximum glory to God through their words and deeds. The Book of Acts serves as a practical model for this Spirit-empowered living.

Compendium on Distinctives VIII and X

We believe the baptism of the Holy Ghost and the filling of the Holy Ghost are distinct, separate, valid, and valuable ministries of the Holy Ghost which may occur simultaneously at salvation.

A) Being filled with the Holy Ghost may and should occur subsequent to salvation in obedience to biblical exhortation.

B) The baptism of the Holy Ghost occurs once and for all at salvation.

C) Being filled with the Holy Ghost should not only be a continuous reality but an ongoing characteristic of the Believer's consecrated holiness (Matt. 3:11; John 1:33; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:18).

D) We believe in speaking in tongues as our heavenly language that builds us up in our most holy faith. Speaking in Tongues is an indicator, not a qualifier. (Jude 20, Acts 19:2-6; Acts 2:1-4; 1 Cor 14:14-15)[1]

EXPLANATION: The FGBCFI's Compendium (summary) on Full Gospel Distinctives VIII and X provides a more detailed and nuanced explanation of their understanding of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and the Filling of the Holy Ghost. This compendium is essential because it clarifies their position, especially in relation to classical Pentecostalism, while still strongly emphasizing charismatic distinctives.

In essence, this Compendium indicates that the FGBCFI adopts a "convergent" or "non-cessationist but non-classical Pentecostal" perspective.

- Baptism of the Holy Ghost is the single, salvific act of incorporation into Christ's body.
- Filling or receiving the Holy Ghost is an ongoing, continuous experience of empowerment that believers should consistently pursue. It can happen at salvation and occur repeatedly afterward.
- Speaking in Tongues is a valid and valuable spiritual gift for personal edification and a sign of the Spirit's presence and power. However, it is *not* required for salvation nor an all-encompassing proof of the Spirit's baptism or filling.

[1] Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, *Policy and Procedural Manual, Second Edition* (Atlanta, GA: Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, 2016), 13-14.

APPENDIX K

PRE- AND POST-PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRES' RESPONSES

1) What does "baptism in the Spirit" mean to you?

Explanation: This question seeks to explore the participant's understanding of the Charismatic movement.

ID#	Pre-Project Response	Post-Project Response	Improvement? (See Comments A & B)
V01	Received the indwelling of God	The ability and desire to empower others in service to work against spiritual warfare and to walk, talk, and live in the boldness of God within me.	**Yes**
V02	Being filled with the Holy Spirit	I have surrendered to the HS and it is evident by speaking in tongues and the manifestation of the power of the spirit in my life.	**Yes**
V03	Means new life, with its breath. Baptism by the water in the spirit gives us new life. It gives us the extra form of renewed life and lives to continue in our daily lives knowing that the HS is with us.	Means you are called in the HS to be a disciple of God.	**Yes**
V04	Total immersing of the HS or the filling is evidence of speaking in tongues.	Totally submerged into the HS filling me totally and completely as I live for Him and serve for Him.	**Yes**
V05	Making a confession that I believe in Jesus died for my sins.	Being filled with the Holy Spirit once you are saved.	**Yes**
V06	You have accepted God as Lord and Savior and consenting to the HS as charge of your life to level us for His glory.	N/A	**N/A**
V07	Being led of the spirit as well as being filled with the Holy Spirit	Being overcome by the HS thereby being led by the HS.	**Yes**
V08	Accepting Jesus as Lord and savior and starting fresh with a renewed and refresh mindset: father, son, Holy.	Having the HS. Believing in the father, son and HS.	**Yes**
V10	Being filled with the Spirit	He dwells in you, speaks to and impowers you.	**Yes**
V11	HS living in me and changing me from the old to new. A new being.	The Spirit comes into your life and takes over. The Spirit dwell and let you know if what you are doing is right or wrong.	**Yes**

COMMENTS:

A) The "Yes" post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire showed that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium.

B) A "No" response indicated that the participant still had little to no understanding of how to answer the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer.

C) Responses for Volunteer V06 were not included in the analysis because the participant was hospitalized after Session One.

2) What or who is the Holy Spirit, and what is the Spirit's purpose?

Explanation: This question seeks to explore the participant's understanding of the third person of the Trinity.

ID#	Pre-Project Response	Post-Project Response	Improvement? (See Comments A & B)
V01	Indwelling of God who leads and guides you into all truths. He is in you working through you.	Holy Spirit is the indwelling of God who lives in us guides and comforts,. The Spirit is our guard to help us to live in truth, know when to repent and to help us live according to God's purpose for our lives.	Yes
V02	Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. Holy Spirit empowers you top live a spirit filled life directed by God. Holy Spirit is guide and comforter.	Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and is our power source that leads, guides, and brings correction in our lives.	Yes
V03	The HS is our "backing" for how we live and love. HS gives us the push we need to live our lives completely. HS is our backing	Holy Spirit is a part of the trinity. The purpose is to be able to put God in our lives and it can be done through the Spirit.	Yes
V04	HS is the third person of the Trinity. the comforter, the still small voice that communes with, leads, guides, and intercedes for us. HS provides fruit for us to reflect on Him.	Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. Purpose is to guide us, protect us, correct us, pray/intercede for us,. Advocate for us, remind us, cover and complete us all the while pointing us to Christ.	Yes
V05	Holy Spirit is the comforter that Jesus promised…to guide me to all truth and righteousness.	Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit.	Yes
V06	Third part of God. keep us in line with God's purpose of following His will and serving according to His direction	N/A	N/A
V07	The Spirt of God. It leads, guides, comfort the believer and reveal everything that Jesus has taught.	Holy Spirit is the third person in the Triune God. the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to lead us to al truths and comfort us in all our needs.	Yes
V08	Holy Spirit is a feeling and connection to body and is will in your life. I think it is your personal connection to him and one of his ways in which he communication to his people.	Holy Spirit is come for your personal connection with God.	Yes
V10	Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinty	Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead, purpose is to lead, guide and speak to and empower you.	Yes
V11	Holy Spirit is one part of the Trinity. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that helps lead and guide us.	Holy Spirit is part of the trinity that comes into your life to change the way you walk and talk to be more like God.	Yes

COMMENTS:

A) The "Yes" post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire showed that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium.

B) A "No" response indicated that the participant still had little to no understanding of how to answer the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer.

C) Responses for Volunteer V06 were not included in the analysis because the participant was hospitalized after Session One.

3) Share your understanding of the "outpouring of the Holy Spirit."

Explanation: This question seeks to gain an understanding of one's comprehension of the transformative power of the Spirit in a person's life.

ID#	Pre-Project Response	Post-Project Response	Improvement? (See Comments A & B)
V01	Is the life changing to all who receive Him. You have spiritual power that no man can control. It changes the atmospheres of people's hearts, lives, and minds. It places a person in a realm of true worship.	A manifestation (spiritual) inside to the physical (outside) transformation of one's life. A true change what I use to be to a new person because old things are become new.	Yes
V02	The Holy Spirit falls upon you, in a service where there is speaking in tongues and or miracles, signs, and/or wonders. The power of God transforms lives.	The manifestation of Holy Spirit upon a person in the evident change, transformation, miracles, signs and wonders.	Yes
V03	Is what comes from the Holy Spirit. The life, love and the extra "fire" we need to complete our lives.	How the Holy Spirit plays a part in our lives.	Yes
V04	Releasing of the Holy Spirit in our midst all-encompassing reaching and filling all.	God's presence in us and through us collectively through His Holy Spirit. Allowing the Spirit to have His way.	Yes
V05	When we are all on one accord, not just in service but when we cannot connect or agree.	When 2 or 3 gathering on one accord then the Spirit of God will pour out His spirit and be in the mist. Just as it was during the day of Pentecost.	Yes
V06	Allow and connect to the touch of God. following His direction in the flow of worship	N/A	N/A
V07	Praise and worship to the Lord of God	Praising God with no restraints, talking in tongue and being filled with the present of God.	Yes
V08	A feeling and/or spiritual connection to God with feeling of his presence	Witness the feeling of Jesus in anyway of worship, singing, clapping, shouting, speaking in tongues, and confession.	Yes
V10	When you are touched by the Holy Spirit and you are changed forever	You receive power.	Yes
V11	Is different in everyone. Some will speak in tongues and some will dance or shout. It is the expression from within the person.,	Will make you show some sign of its presence by dancing, speaking in tongues, or even being slain in the spirit because it takes over and is so powerful.	Yes

COMMENTS:

A) The "Yes" post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire showed that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium.

B) A "No" response indicated that the participant still had little to no understanding of how to answer the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer.

C) Responses for Volunteer V06 were not included in the analysis because the participant was hospitalized after Session One.

4) What is your understanding and assessment of Pentecostalism?

Explanation: The classic doctrine of Pentecostalism acknowledges the second work of grace, which occurs after salvation and is always followed by the person speaking in other tongues.

ID#	Pre-Project Response	Post-Project Response	Improvement? (See Comments A & B)
V01	Is the experience of Pentecost where everyone is on one accord: all are one.	It is the second grace which is believed by the evidence of speaking in tongues. Pentecostalism believes that you can still tarry for the Holy Spirit and you are saved by the evidence of speaking in tongues.	Yes
V02	Pentecostalism is a religion where the Spirit is celebrated and manifestation of God's power.	A belief in the activity of the Holy Spirit including spiritual gifts, language, healing and prophecy.	Yes
V03	Unclear	Pentecostalism is a denomination that believes that a second phase (evidence?) is speaking in tongues.	Yes
V04	Pentecostalism belief in the filling of the Holy Spirit, empowering us for service and strengthening and deepening our walk with God.	Pentecostalism is the belief that the evidence of tongues has to be present in order to be saved.	Yes
V05	Pentecostalism is when God poured out is Spirit on each person at his time and each person understands in his/her time., not based on denomination but all who have a desire to know Him and worship Him in truth and spirit.	Pentecostalism is when people believe that there is a second baptism of the HS and you must speak in tongues to be saved. But I believe once you are saved you are saved until the day of redemption, once you have the Father you have the Son who is Begotten, the son begotten (corrected: proceeds the Spirit from the Father through the Son) the Holy Spirit.	Yes
V06	The move of the Spirit to elevate us	N/A	N/A
V07	Having the Holy Spirit to lead you in worshipping God	Talking in tongues as a requirement.	Yes
V08	Holy Spirit is a religion, a culture of a religion.	Holy Spirit	No
V10	The day that you were filled with the Holy Spirit.	Pentecostalism is when the spirit of the Lord came upon you and you received power.	No
V11	On the day of Pentecost, the holy ghost fell on everyone (in the upper room?). it is the movement of the Spirit of today.	It causes us to be on one accord while serving the Lord with worship.	No

COMMENTS:

A) The "Yes" post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire showed that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium.

B) A "No" response indicated that the participant still had little to no understanding of how to answer the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer.

C) Responses for Volunteer V06 were not included in the analysis because the participant was hospitalized after Session One.

5) What is the difference, if any, between Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity?

Explanation: Charismatic Christianity is a movement that grew out of Pentecostalism. Therefore, it shares the Pentecostal emphasis on the Holy Spirit but does not believe that Spirit baptism is a second work of grace accompanied by speaking in other tongues. Charismatics view the baptism in the Spirit as an awakening of believers to the Spirit's presence. The Spirit works in and through believers as it did in biblical times.

ID#	Pre-Project Response	Post-Project Response	Improvement? (See Comments A & B)
V01	Pentecostalism is where people worshipping on one accord in true worship. Charismatic Christianity is a persuasion to come together but are not on one accord..	Pentecostalism is a belief while Charismatic Christianity is a movement	No
V02	Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity are the same thing.	Pentecostalism believes in the speaking of tongues as the evidence of the second grace. Charismatic Christianity is an awakening of the Spirit's presence.	Yes
V03	Unclear of Pentecostalism. Charismatic Christianity is in the "umph" that we need to live and love and understand God and what He can do and what we do through the Spirit.	Pentecostalism is a denomination that believes that a second grace is speaking in tongues. Charismatic Christianity is an awareness for the Holy Spirit as the way to God.	Yes
V04	Similar in the belief of spiritual gifts but may differ in origin and the way the gifts are used.	Pentecostalism is the second work of grace, evidence by tongues. You need to speak in tongues to be saved. Charismatic Christianity you do not necessarily need tongues to be saved. Tongues edify us singularly through our prayer language, publicly, there needs to be a translator. Tongues is an indicator, not a qualifier.	Yes
V05	Not a big difference	Pentecostalism is when you are not saved unless you speak in tongues. Charismatic Christianity is not against speaking in tongues but it just clearing something about the word of God,. it is not a denomination; it is just clearing the word of God and bring the two together to get God words to all.	Yes
V06	Both are of the flow of the Spirit	N/A	N/A
V07	They are similar	Very little difference from what I see and the way you praise God and receive the Holy Spirit in worship.	No
V08	Unfamiliar with this concepts and meaning but not the word Pentecostalism. I believe it is a holiness doctrine	Pentecostalism is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The showing of God on your life the way you walk and talk.	Yes
V10	No response	No response	No
V11	Pentecostalism is a movement whereas Charismatic Christianity is a style of worship.	Pentecostalism is the guideline to show us to how to be on one accord. Charismatic Christianity is a style of worship including high praise.	Yes

COMMENTS:

A) The "Yes" post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire showed that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium.

B) A "No" response indicated that the participant still had little to no understanding of how to answer the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer.

C) Responses for Volunteer V06 were not included in the analysis because the participant was hospitalized after Session One.

6) Who is Paul Sylvester Morton, and what is he known for in the Christian community?

Explanation: Paul S. Morton (PSM) is a gospel singer, author, pastor, and founder of the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International (FGBCFI), a charismatic Baptist movement.

ID#	Pre-Project Response	Post-Project Response	Improvement? (See Comments A & B)
V01	PSM created the Full Gospel Fellowship International to bring Baptist into understanding to receive the Holy Spirit not just on Sunday but in every worship setting. Involves the heart not just going through the motions.	PSM is the founding father of the FGBCFI bringing a charismatic movement of the HS to believers an awakening to the sprit within you.	Yes
V02	PSM founding father of the FGBCFI	PSM is the founder of FGBCFI	Yes
V03	Unknown at this time	PSM is the founder of the FG. He is a preacher/pastor. he is still alive today and has a church of many congregants.	Yes
V04	PSM founding father of the FGBCF and introducing elements to the Baptist to having access to and walking in the fruits/gifts of the Holy Spirit.	PSM is the founder of the FGBCF believing that we as Baptist can exercise fully in the gifts of the Holy Spirit freely as God intended in His word.	Yes
V05	He is tied to Full Gospel.	PSM is the founder of the Full Gospel movement.	Yes
V06	Founder of FGBCF not a new denomination but serving God as a "fellowship" to continue to life Him on high.	N/A	N/A
V07	Pastor of the Full Gospel Baptist Church	PSM is the founder of Full Gospel	Yes
V08	Founder of FGBCFI, known for preaching teaching, and music ministry	Founder of Full Gospel, creating a fellowship of worship	Yes
V10	PSM is the founder of FGBC	Bishop who started the Full Gospel fellowship	Yes
V11	PSM father of the FGBCFI and the first original presiding Bishop.	Founding father of the FGBCFI. God gave him the vision to start the Full Gospel.	Yes

COMMENTS:

A) The "Yes" post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire showed that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium.

B) A "No" response indicated that the participant still had little to no understanding of how to answer the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer.

C) Responses for Volunteer V06 were not included in the analysis because the participant was hospitalized after Session One.

7) Describe a moment when you experienced the Holy Spirit in your life.

Explanation: This question explores the participants' feelings, fears, concerns, and other expressions regarding the Spirit's involvement in the participants' life experiences.

ID#	Pre-Project Response	Post-Project Response	Improvement? (See Comments A & B)
V01	The Holy Spirit woke me up (one day) and said, "write what you hear". This was confirmed when I met a "prophet" who repeated what the Lord said word-for-word".	In praise: my evidence was speaking inwardly to the Holy Spirit which slain – hearing the voice of God.	Yes
V02	When the Holy Spirit told me to develop the online church and God told me that He would call my son home to himself.	being slain in the Holy Spirit being healed and called to preach and the development of a virtual church.	Yes
V03	Spirit is always in my life through random people. (long explanation)	Holy Spirit recently moved in my life. I had never felt such a spirit before in my life. I am humbled and honored that God choose me to be revealed. Sill not sure what it all means but with the Lord's help, I plan to find out.	Yes
V04	I experience the Holy Spirit every day in my life. While attending a non-denominational church, I experienced the presence of the flow of the Spirit that allowed me to speak in a language that is incorporated in my prayer time ever since.	I experience the Holy Spirit every day, when I open my eyes in the mornings I open my opens with prayer. He is there when I study a verse or word. He ministers to me as I ponder throughout my day. I cling to His still small voice as the Spirit leads, guides and directs me throughout my day, week, month, and year.	Yes
V05	Holy Spirit dwells with me in my life daily. I can feel His presence in my prayer life and when I am making a decision.	I felt the Holy Spirit is in my life when I was sitting on my mother porch, feeling all alone and I needed something in my life. I was feeling sad and lonely. I looked up and asked God to come into my life once I had and then felt a change went all over me and the spirit of the Lord come into my life.	Yes
V06	Calling of the Lord and coming to understand His word and the guidance that it brings	N/A	N/A
V07	When I was in church and heard a sermon about the way I was living and the Holy Spirit came over me telling me to choose how I want to live, and I did.	When I first came out of a storm with cancer and was so thankful and grateful for bring me out. And I know that if was the Lord that did it cause I felt his presence and now I can't stop praising him.	Yes
V08	Still unsure if I have experienced it. I do feel a personal connection to God and have felt a way during services or prayers. I can recall a time when a loved one past away and the person prayed continuous(ly) and yelled out the name Jesus, Jesus	I feel like it has been many times. I do remember a time as the minister was praying over my father, I just became calling on the name of Jesus for his life and legacy.	Yes
V10	No response	I received power and the (Lord) speak thru and to me	Yes
V11	One time something fell on me and I could not control it. It was the experience of being light and happiest I've been.	I was standing in an altar call and hands was laid on me and I was unable to stand.	Yes

COMMENTS:

A) The "Yes" post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire showed that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium.

B) A "No" response indicated that the participant still had little to no understanding of how to answer the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer.

C) Responses for Volunteer V06 were not included in the analysis because the participant was hospitalized after Session One

8) How do you feel when you see the pastor, church leaders, and laity express the move of the Spirit in worship?

Explanation: This question seeks to observe whether the participants are excited to see the "chief worshippers" openly praising God's magnificence.

ID#	Pre-Project Response	Post-Project Response	Improvement? (See Comments A & B)
V01	I just want to go higher, higher, and higher!!!	Let's go higher! If this church would catch on fire!	Yes
V02	I am drawn into the move of the spirit in prayer, worship or amazed and praising.	Blessed, thankful, excited and in expectation of what the Holy Spirit is doing through the people.	Yes
V03	It is difficult to know how and why pastors and church leaders "know" the HS so well. It is "very tough to do" (to feel the move of the HS)	When the pastor and other church leaders express the Holy Spirit, to move me. I feel comfortable and at peace that they have the Holy Spirit in them and are able to move the congregation.	Yes
V04	I feel free in the Spirit. I feel even more connected to the body as a unit while in worship.	I feel invited and involved in the trinitarian dance in which we are all invited so that we achieve total worship as true worshippers.	Yes
V05	I feel that the presence of the Lord is in the service and the Lord is speaking to us all in a message.	I feel that Holy Spirit is in me, one person to another. I feel the spirit and I feel good.	Yes
V06	I am blessed to be apart and thankful to recognize the moving of the spirit.	N/A	N/A
V07	Good all over and it make me want to join in.	I want to join in on the move of the spirit.	Yes
V08	I so not think I feel any particular way. I just recognize they are having their personal connection with God.	Happy, good in tune and ready to praise and pray.	Yes
V10	I'm excited that they're truly worshipping God	I feel joyful	Yes
V11	I am excited and encouraged that we are all on one accord.	I feel happy and want to join in not just to spectate.	Yes

COMMENTS:

A) The "Yes" post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire showed that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium.

B) A "No" response indicated that the participant still had little to no understanding of how to answer the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer.

C) Responses for Volunteer V06 were not included in the analysis because the participant was hospitalized after Session One.

9) How do you feel when you hear people speaking in an unfamiliar language (tongues) or displaying other manifestations of the Spirit, such as laying on hands in church?

Explanation: This question aims to explore the participants' feelings, fears, concerns, and other expressions about others who may be exercising their gifts in various ways, such as speaking in unknown tongues.

ID#	Pre-Project Response	Post-Project Response	Improvement? (See Comments A & B)
V01	God is present and those people was worshipping in another realm. Very spiritual.	The HS of God is moving. There is healing in the house that speaks God! we are listening.	Yes
V02	I am amazed, rejoicing, praying, thanking God.	Blessed, thankful	Yes
V03	I have never experienced people talking in tongues. I would like to experience that. I would like to witness is.	I have never heard anyone continuously speak in tongues. I have seen other manifestations when others are happy and I feel happy that the HS has aroused them to do that.	Yes
V04	I feel humbled and nudged to speak in tongues myself. I allow myself and my prayer at that moment for God to open me up to the flow of the HS so that the HS can have His way in me and in the service surrounding me.	I feel caught up in the HS when I hear others speaking in their prayer language and as other manifestations are displayed I feel moved to join in as the HS flows and directs.	Yes
V05	DN always feel the presence of the Lord in the house without an interpreter. There must be an interpreter. I do believe in laying of hands when the HS is released.	When there is no interpreter I know that is a language between them and God and when there is an interpreter the spirit of the Lord is speaking to the people.	Yes
V06	blessed	N/A	N/A
V07	Humble, as it (is) in the present (presence) of God	Blessed to be a witness	Yes
V08	I do not think I feel any particular way either. I feel some people have been called and have a different type of connection to God therefore their experience and relationship is such as that just recognize they are having their personal connection with God.	Fine.	Yes
V10	God is using them in a mighty way	I feel fine for it is the Lord's doing.	Yes
V11	Sometimes I feel encouraged and happy because I can feel the HS moving. Other times I am confused because it doesn't seem real.	There has been times when someone was trying to push me down. hearing speaking in tongues does not bother me but sometimes it seems forced.	Yes

COMMENTS:

A) The "Yes" post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire showed that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium.

B) A "No" response indicated that the participant still had little to no understanding of how to answer the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer.

C) Responses for Volunteer V06 were not included in the analysis because the participant was hospitalized after Session One.

10) What is the purpose of intercessory prayer (IP) in the worship service?

Explanation: This question explores whether the participant understands the difference between prayer and intercessory prayer. Prayer often begins with the individual, but intercession always starts with the Holy Spirit. The intercessor prays only what the Holy Spirit prompts them to pray.

ID#	Pre-Project Response	Post-Project Response	Improvement? (See Comments A & B)
V01	Change the atmosphere. Bringing a breakthrough for those in need of prayers answered, send the demons fleeing. Intercessory is needed for everyone as Jesus intercedes for us.	Open the atmosphere and allow the HS to come in because He is inviting our spirits are open and intercessory went to God on our behalf to get us to a place to receive Him. IP is necessary for the body of believers and the congregants so we can all go higher in God.	Yes
V02	Standing in the gap in prayer. praying over people and situation.	Standing in the gap as the Spirit moves. Building a hedge around that there be no distractions.	Yes
V03	IP is when others can pray for you. I can pray to a saint and ask the saint to pray to God for me.	Prayer is on my behalf, (while) IP is someone praying on your behalf to God.	Yes
V04	IP is not only standing in the gap for others but to come against the enemy in Jesus' name so that the HS can flow freely.	IP always starts with the HS!	Yes
V05	Prayer for the entire body of the church.	When I go into intercessory prayer we all are praying on one accord and we are praying for one another.	Yes
V06	To usher in the spirit	N/A	N/A
V07	Praying for others	To pray for others through the direction of the Holy Spirit.	Yes
V08	IP to me is allowing and asking the Holy Spirit to be a part of the worship experience. More like a welcome or invitation to come into the experience. "setting the tone for expectation" of God's goodness.	Create an atmosphere of worship to usher God into the service by setting the time for praise and His presence.	Yes
V10	To pray for others as you have been moved by God	Purpose is to pray for those who are overwhelmed with the troubles in their life.	Yes
V11	IP lead us into worship and prepares us to hear the word of God.	It is preparing the worship service before it begins to lead us.	Yes

COMMENTS:

A) The "Yes" post-project responses to the same questions used in the pre-project questionnaire indicated that the participant had a good understanding of the question after attending the training symposium.

B) A "No" response suggested that the participant still had little to no knowledge of how to respond to the question after the training. In other words, they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in their answer.

C) Responses for Volunteer V06 were not used in the analysis due to the participant's hospitalization after Session One.

APPENDIX L

100-DAY LISTENING PRAYER JOURNEY

100-DAY LISTENING PRAYER JOURNEY:

Mount Carmel is embarking on a 100-day commitment to prayer and fasting. Each willing and able member is encouraged to remain dedicated, devoted, and determined to "open the floodgates" by asking God for a divine breakthrough over the next 100 days. We invite you to pause each morning for five minutes of intentional "Listening Prayer" throughout this journey.

1) STEPS FOR LISTENING:

Each morning, before starting your daily activities, follow these steps:

- Utilize the 5-minute prayer tool.
- Set aside at least 5 minutes each morning to pray.
- Find a quiet place and a comfortable position.
- Pause and reflect on what it means for God to be with you.
    - Remember, God is with you even in seemingly impossible or hopeless situations.
- Take a moment to reflect on God's presence in your life, particularly in situations that appear hopeless.

2) SAMPLE PRAYERS:

- **Sample 1**: Lord, help me to open my mind, soul, and heart to prepare for this moment. Help me to be ready, attentive, and available to You. Please assist me in clarifying and purifying my intentions. Lord, I sometimes feel conflicting desires. I want to place my whole life in Your hands. In Christ's name, Amen.
- **Sample 2**: Dear God, my life feels overwhelmingly busy, continuously pursuing things that seem unimportant or fleeting. If I give You my heart, everything I do will flow from my "new" heart. Guide me in Your way. In Christ's name, I pray. Amen.
- **Sample 3**: Gracious Creator, help me hear You today. May everything I do today align with Your will. May all my actions bring You glory. I entrust all my encounters, reflections, and even my frustrations and shortcomings into Your hands. In Jesus' name, I pray, Amen.

3) SUGGESTION ON HOW TO SPEND TIME ALONE WITH GOD

- **Be still.** Slow down; resist the urge to hurry. Quiet your mind. Stop fidgeting; rest in God's embrace. Sit, lie down, or kneel before God. Surrender your body to God and wait patiently for Him.
- **Be reverent.** Sing songs of love to God. Invite God to fill your heart. Elevate God's glory: read a Psalm or song of praise aloud. Declare His Majesty!
- **Express gratitude.** Thank God for His mercies, which are new every morning: food, breath, health, life, strength, and more. Thank Him for your sight, hearing, touch, and smell. Appreciate God for the blessings and benefits you receive.
- **Confess your Sins.** Conduct a spiritual inventory. Allow God to perform "open-heart" surgery on your words, attitudes, thoughts, and actions.

FEBRUARY[1]

Sunday
February 2 – Colossians 3:23-24 – **23** Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, **24** knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.
February 3 – 1 Corinthians 3:9 – For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.
February 4 – Matthew 5:14 – You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.
February 5 – Psalm 150:1-6 – Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! **2** Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! **3** Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! **4** Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! **5** Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! **6** Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
February 6 – Psalm 100:5 – For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever,
February 7 – Nehemiah 4:6 – So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.
February 8 – Ephesians 4:16 – From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Sunday
February 9 – 2 Peter 1:19 – And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,
February 10 – James 3:1 – Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.
February 11 – Hebrews 13:7 – Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.
February 12 – 2 Timothy 3:16 – All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
February 13 – 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 - **12** We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, **13** and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.
February 14 – 1 Corinthians 9:14 – In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.
February 15 – Luke 6:48 – He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

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[1]Except where indicated, all scripture references in this document are from the English Standard Version.

Sunday
February 16 – Psalm 118:8 – It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.
February 17 – Psalm 84:11 – For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.
February 18 – Ephesians 4:4 – There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call.
February 19 – 1 John 5:7-8 –[7] For there are three that testify: [8] the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.
February 20 – 1 John 2:27 – But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.
February 21 – 2 Peter 1:21 – For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
February 22 – 2 Peter 1:19-21 – [19] And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, [20] knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. [21] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Sunday
February 23 – Colossians 1:10 – So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God
February 24 – 1 Peter 1:23-25 – [23] since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; [24] for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, [25] but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.
February 25 – James 1:3 – For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.
February 26 – Hebrews 13:17 – Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.
February 27 – Hebrews 11:6 – And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
February 28 – Hebrews 11:3 – By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

MARCH

March 1 – Hebrews 10:23 – Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Sunday
March 2 – Hebrews 6:19 – We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,

March 3 – Titus 3:10 – As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him,
March 4 – 2 Timothy 3:15 – And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
March 5 – 1 Timothy 3:16 – Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.
March 6 – 1 Timothy 3:6 – He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.
March 7 – Deuteronomy 7:9 – Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.
March 8 – Colossians 4:2-4 – **2** Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. **3** At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— **4** that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

Sunday
March 9 – Colossians 2:6-7 – **6** Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, **7** rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.
March 10 –Philippians 1:1 – Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:
March 11 – Ephesians 5:1 – Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.
March 12 – Ephesians 3:20 – Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,
March 13 – Ephesians 1:3 – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,
March 14 – Galatians 1:10 – For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.
March 15 – Galatians 1:8 – But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

Sunday
March 16 – 2 Corinthians 10:6 – Being ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.
March 17 – 2 Corinthians 5:7 – For we walk by faith, not by sight.
March 18 – 1 Corinthians 15:19 – If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.
March 19 – 1 Corinthians 15:14-15 – **14** And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. **15** We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

March 20 – 1 Corinthians 2:13-14 – [13] And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. [14] The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
March 21 – Romans 5:1-2 – [1] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. [2] Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
March 22 – Acts 17:28 – For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'

Sunday
March 23 – Acts 13:22 – And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'
March 24 – John 10:35 – If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken
March 25 – John 10:27 ESV – My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
March 26 – John 10:2 ESV – But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.
March 27 – Proverbs 30:6 – Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.
March 28 – Proverbs 27:17 – Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.
March 29 – Proverbs 22:20-21 – [20] Have I not written for you thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge, [21] to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?

Sunday
March 30 – Psalm 127:3-5 – [3] Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. [4] Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. [5] Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.
March 31 – Psalm 119:105 – Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

APRIL

April 1 – Psalm 119:89-90 – [89] Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. [90] Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.
April 2 – Psalm 105:8 – He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
April 3 – John 1:14 – And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

April 4 – Psalm 91:1-2 – [1] He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide
in the shadow of the Almighty. [2] I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my
God, in whom I trust."
April 5 – John 3:16-17 – [16] For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that
whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send
his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved
through him.

Sunday
April 6 – Romans 12:11 – Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.
April 7 – Acts 20:28 – Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which
the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained
with his own blood.
April 8 – John 1:1-5 – [1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made
through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. [4] In him was
life, and the life was the light of men. [5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness
has not overcome it.
April 9 – Luke 21:33 – Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass
away.
April 10 – Luke 5:26 – And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and
were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."
April 11 – Hebrews 6:10 – For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the
love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.
April 12 – Galatians 6:9 – And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season
we will reap, if we do not give up.

Sunday
April 13 – Psalm 126:3 – The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.
April 14 – Deuteronomy 6:4-9 – [4] Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is
one. [5] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and
with all your might. [6] And these words that I command you today shall be on your
heart.[7] You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you
sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you
rise. [8] You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between
your eyes. [9] You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.
April 15 – Matthew 24:2 – But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not?
Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be
thrown down."
April 16 – Psalm 81:10 – I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of
Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.
April 17 – Psalm 34:8 – Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who
takes refuge in him!
April 18 – Psalm 12:7 – You, O Lord, will keep them; you will guard us from this
generation forever.

April 19 – Matthew 16:17 – And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”

Sunday
April 20 – Ecclesiastes 3:14 – I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.
April 21 – Matthew 10:34 – Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.
April 22 – Matthew 7:13-14 – **13** Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. **14** For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.
April 23 – Matthew 5:17-18 – **17** Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. **18** For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.
April 24 – Jeremiah 36:32 – Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And many similar words were added to them.
April 25 – John 15:5 – I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.
April 26 – Nehemiah 2:18 – And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

Sunday
April 27 – Matthew 4:4 – But he answered, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”
April 28 – Matthew 16:18 – And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
April 29 – Jeremiah 3:15 – ‘And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.
April 30 – Acts 20:32 – And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

MAY

May 1 – Deuteronomy 10:5 – Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark that I had made. And there they are, as the Lord commanded me.
May 2 – Galatians 1:3-5 – **3** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, **4** who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, **5** to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.
May 3 – John 10:14 – I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.

Sunday
May 4 – Psalm 79:13 – But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.
May 5 – Mark 11:24 – Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours
May 6 – Romans 15:13 – May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.
May 7 – Exodus 23:25 – You shall serve the Lord your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you.
May 8 – Isaiah 43:18-19 – **18** "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. **19** Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."
May 9 – Psalm 1:1-2 – Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; **2** but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.
May 10 – Revelation 21:1-2 – **1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. **2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Sunday
May 11 – Revelation 21:3-4 – **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **4** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."
May 12 – Jude 24-25 – **24** Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, **25** to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

APPENDIX M

COMPARISONS OF PRE- AND POST-QUESTIONNAIRES

Comparison of Pre- and Post-Questionnaires

"Yes" and "No" Responses to the Pre-Project Questions from the Volunteers.										
Volunteer ID#	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Q6**	**Q7**	**Q8**	**Q9**	**Q10**
V01	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V02	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V03	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
V04	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V05	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
V07	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V08	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
V10	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
V11	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes% per Q	**77.8%**	**55.6%**	**55.6%**	**11.1%**	**11.1%**	**66.7%**	**55.6%**	**77.8%**	**66.7%**	**88.9%**
No% per Q	**22.2%**	**44.4%**	**44.4%**	**88.9%**	**88.9%**	**33.3%**	**44.4%**	**22.2%**	**33.3%**	**11.1%**

Legend for the "Yes" and "No" responses on the Pre-Project Questionnaire.

A) The "Q" means "Question": for example, "Q1" refers to Question 1 in the pre-project questionnaire.

B) A "Yes" response shows that the participant's answer to the pre-project questionnaire included relevant ideas, demonstrated clear reasoning, and covered all parts of the question.

C) A "No" response means that the participant's answer was incomplete, lacked relevant information, or showed a misunderstanding of key concepts.

"Yes" and "No" Responses to the Post-Project Questions After the Training of the Volunteers.										
Volunteer ID#	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**	**Q5**	**Q6**	**Q7**	**Q8**	**Q9**	**Q10**
V01	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V02	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V03	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V04	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V05	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V07	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V08	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V10	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
V11	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes %	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**55.6%**	**66.7%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
No %	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**44.4%**	**33.3%**	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**0.0%**	**0.0%**

Legend for the "Yes" and "No" responses on the Post-Project Questionnaire.

A) The "Q" means "Question": for example, "Q1" refers to Question 1 in the pre-project questionnaire.

B) A "Yes" response indicates that the participant's post-project questionnaire shows they have a strong understanding of the question after the training symposium. They clearly explained key concepts and provided good examples**.**

C) A "No" response indicates that the participant's post-project questionnaire answer was incomplete, lacked relevant information, or still showed little to no understanding of how to answer the question correctly after the training symposium. The project investigator assessed that they generally missed key details or had significant misunderstandings in trying to respond to the question.

APPENDIX N

KEY STATISTICS FROM JOURNALING EXERCISE

PROJECT TOPIC: Removing Systemic Strongholds in Shifting Congregational Paradigms of Worship and Praxis
PROJECT EVENT: Key Statistics from Composition Book Journaling Exercise
PROJECT DATES: July 19, 2025, through August 9, 2025

Volunteer Identifier # (See comment A)	Number of Written Pages per Participant	Average Number of Pages Written per Session	See Comment B	See Comment C
V01	9	1.3	4	44.4%
V02	9	1.3	6	66.7%
V03	30	4.3	13	43.3%
V04	15	2.1	8	53.3%
V05	13	1.9	8	61.5%
V07	2	0.3	2	100.0%
V08	8	1.1	6	75.0%
V10	0	-	0	0.0%
V11	21	3.0	10	47.6%
Total pages	**107**	**15.3**	**57**	**53.3%**

Number of Participants	9
Average pages written per participant	11.9

Comments:

A) A unique identifier was used instead of the volunteer's name to anonymize the data and for research purposes only. The identifier, such as "V01," indicates "Volunteer 01" for all data collection and analysis related to this participant.

B) The data for each participant, listed in this column, shows the number of pages they wrote in their composition book from Session 3 (July 26) to Session 5 (August 2), demonstrating how instruction during Sessions 3 (Biblical Foundation) and 4 (Historical Foundation) affected their conative change in the symposium.

C) The data listed in this column show the percentage or relative number of pages written by each participant from Sessions 3 to 5 that were related to the instruction during Sessions 3 (Biblical Foundation) and 4 (Historical Foundation).

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